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Leonard Woods

THE

WORKS

OF

LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

LATELY PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, ANDOVER.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BOSTON:
JOHN P. JEWETT & COMPANY,
17 & 19 CORNHILL.
1851.

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JOHN D. FLAGG,
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TO

HIS FORMER PUPILS

IN

THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN ANDOVER,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

1385

DEDICATORY ADDRESS.

My Beloved Pupils;

I experience no ordinary pleasure in dedicating the following volumes to you — towards whom I once sustained so interesting a relation, and whom I can now address as Christian brethren, occupied with important and sacred duties in different parts of the world.

While I have been employed in revising these Lectures, my thoughts have frequently been directed to that pleasant room, where I met you in successive classes, from day to day, for a long series of years, and where the most momentous of all subjects engaged our united attention.

As we proceeded in our investigations, we came to the pleasing conclusion that, *although our faculties are circumscribed, we may, within our proper limits, attain to a far more complete knowledge, than is commonly apprehended;* and also, that, *in examining the various doctrines of theology, we should hold fast that which is clear and certain, and pay little regard to that which is obscure or doubtful.*

From the Lecture-room my thoughts have passed with lively emotions to the Wednesday Evening Conference, to our Chapel services on the Sabbath, to our days of fasting and prayer, and to our private intercourse.

When I review my labors for the thirty-eight years, during which I held the office of Theological Professor in the Seminary, I have a consciousness, that I endeavored to teach and defend

the true principles of Christianity, and that I sincerely aimed at your improvement in knowledge and piety. But there is mingled with this consciousness, a deep conviction of my deficiencies. And I am persuaded, that, had it not been for these lamented deficiencies, I might have contributed in a much higher degree to your intellectual and spiritual improvement, and consequently to your usefulness in the service of Christ. The Lord forgive what was faulty, and graciously accept what was well-done, or well-intended.

But where now are the young men, with whom I was connected in the Seminary? A large number of them have already finished their work, and have gone, I trust, to be present with the Lord. But the greater part are scattered abroad over our country, laboring as pastors of Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Baptist, and Methodist churches, as officers in our literary and theological institutions, and in our various benevolent societies, and as missionaries in our new States, and in destitute parts of our old States; while many others are engaged in preaching the Gospel among our Indian tribes, and among the unevangelized in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the islands of the seas. When I turn my thoughts to my former pupils, thus occupying important stations in different parts of the earth, and accomplishing a work which, I doubt not, has been and will be to the glory of God, and to the welfare of the world, my heart is filled with joy; and I bless the Author of all good, that this Seminary has already grown to such unexpected greatness, and extended its happy influence so much further, than was thought of by the founders and first professors, when they looked upon it in its infancy. And I bless God too, that I have been called to spend so great a portion of my life in laboring together with my colleagues, to train up so many young men for the sacred office, and for other stations of usefulness.

In offering the following volumes to the public, I am giving my public and solemn testimony, and probably my last testimony, in favor of the leading truths of revelation, and against the contrary errors. The principles here advanced have not been adopted without long-continued inquiry, nor without an acquaintance,

which I may call an *experimental* acquaintance, with the arguments which have been urged against the orthodox faith, and in favor of opposite schemes. There is not, so far as I know, a single objection or difficulty, to which the orthodox system is thought to be exposed, which has not, during the fifty years since I was ordained to the work of the ministry, often presented itself to my mind with great plausibility and force. And as to the arguments in support of the common schemes of error, I have, times without number, looked at them in their most attractive forms. I have familiarly handled them, and felt their weight. I know full well what a powerful appeal they make to mere speculative reason, and to the pride and selfishness of the heart. But when I have searched the Scriptures, and have sought the promised guidance of the Spirit, error has lost its attractions, and I have, with increased satisfaction and confidence, rested in the doctrines of revelation, as held by the orthodox in all parts of Christendom, and particularly in New England. The free inquiry which was always countenanced and practised in my lecture room, together with an examination of the authors who most ably advocate the different schemes of religion, especially those who oppose orthodoxy, has contributed more and more to the confirmation of my faith. The direction of the apostle, *to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good*, I have endeavored to follow. And I now have a persuasion, which I think nothing will ever unsettle, that the doctrines which I have taught, and which are exhibited in these volumes, are the very doctrines which are taught by the word of God, and which he has blessed as the means of converting sinners, and sanctifying and comforting believers. There is, in my view, no need either of any new revelation, or of reconstructing the religion of the Bible, or adding anything to its teachings. The Bible is sufficiently plain to those who search it with simplicity of faith, and with minds untainted with philosophy and science falsely so called. It makes known all necessary truth. No one who labors in the spirit of the Apostles, to advance the kingdom of Christ either in Christian or heathen lands, will ever find the lack of any truth, which man's spiritual interest requires. More knowledge of Scripture, more

piety, simplicity and faithfulness in the ministry and in the church, and more extensive and powerful influences of the Spirit, are manifestly needed, to bring our fallen race to bear the holy image of God. A new era in the Christian world is to be earnestly desired and expected. But that new era is not to consist in any new modelling of the doctrines of religion, as set forth in the Scriptures, or in any addition to them. Who among the ablest and most successful ministers in Protestant Christendom have ever found any chasm in scriptural theology, which needed to be filled up by a new revelation, or a new philosophy? Who among them ever exhausted, or half exhausted the treasures of divine truth contained in the word of God? There is in fact no more need of any doctrine, not revealed in Scripture, than there is need of a new sun, or a new atmosphere. In elevating the Christian character to the highest attainable excellence, no flights of a lofty imagination, no explorings of curiosity, no long struggles of intellect to get at new views of the Trinity or the Atonement, could be of any avail. If you would enlighten the mind, subdue sin, and secure a cheerful obedience, hold fast and inculcate those precious truths, which are written, as with a sun-beam, in the holy Scriptures, and which are plain to those whom Christ calls "babes," though contrary to the reasoning of "the wise and the prudent."

The following Lectures may serve as an historical document, showing hereafter what was the theology taught and maintained in this Seminary for the first thirty-eight years after its establishment, under the eye of the Founders while they lived, and in conformity with the creed by them appointed, and under the eye of the Visitors and Trustees, during the time of my continuance in office, and with their approbation.

After casting an eye backwards over the period of my professorship, and over the fifty years in which I have sustained the sacred office, I cannot but look forward to the progress of things in time to come; and the question, *what will be fifty years hence*, presses upon me with indescribable interest. When I consider what sins, what errors and erratic tendencies prevail, and how many, who might reasonably be expected to adhere to the

word of God, are carried about with every wind of doctrine, and seem fond of any thing in philosophy or religion, which will turn them aside from the plain teachings of Scripture, I am full of painful apprehensions; and in my serious musings, I say to myself — who can tell what wide departures from the truth — what out-breakings of depravity in Church and State, will characterize the coming half century? Who can tell what errors in ethics and religion may insinuate themselves into our literary and theological institutions, and into the Christian ministry? So far as I look merely at fallen man — yea, at man in his best estate, the prospect is dark and fearful.

But my heart is soon cheered by better thoughts. I hear the voice of Him, who has all power in heaven and earth, saying, "Fear not." He assures me, that the time of his universal reign draws near; that the world for which he died, shall be redeemed; that the prayers of his saints shall be answered, and their labors and sufferings rewarded; and that his peaceful, holy kingdom shall come. These blessed assurances raise me above my gloomy apprehensions. What the Lord has promised to do, shall be done. Not one jot or tittle shall fail. I have then the happiness of looking for better days — days of higher prosperity to the church and the world. Evil may for a time continue to find a place, but it will be overcome with good. If genius and learning are, in many lamented instances, directed to the propagation of fatal error, the deformities of error will, by that very means, be more clearly revealed. If our most sacred institutions shall, for a season, be corrupted with unchristian dogmas and dreamy speculations, they will certainly be delivered from those corruptions, and be restored to the sound principles of their Puritan founders. If, among the ministers of Christ, there are those who discard the faith once delivered to the saints, it is to be hoped that their apostasy will not be final; or, if final, that it will be a salutary warning to others, and that the ministry will, through the grace of God, be more established in the truth, more active, pure and spiritual, and more successful in promoting the salvation of men, than at any former period. The predictions and promises of God's word, and the in-

dications of his providence plainly show, that the day is not far distant, when the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord.

When Joseph was about to die, he remembered the promises of God respecting the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage, and he said to them—"*God shall surely visit you.*" So I say to those who are seeking the salvation of the world. *Persevere in your labors and prayers, for God will surely visit you, and will fulfil every one of his promises respecting the kingdom of Christ.* In such a pleasing light does the future present itself to my view, and thus does the hope of coming good prevail over my anxieties and my fears.

If the ministers and churches of Christ of different denominations continue to increase in their pious zeal, and in their deeds of beneficence, the next fifty years, as they have done the fifty years past; if Bible Societies, if the cause of Christian missions, of Tracts, and of Temperance, and other Christian enterprises, may, through the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, go forward with a constantly growing prosperity, we shall, ere long, approach visibly nearer to the consummation which we have devoutly desired, than any who have gone before us; and those who may live at the close of the nineteenth century, will have reason to congratulate themselves, and one another, and to say—*blessed are our eyes that see those things, which prophets and kings, apostles and martyrs, and all the saints of former days, desired to see, but did not see them.*

But a most important duty devolves on you, brethren, in the accomplishment of the great plan of divine benevolence. Your number is large; and if in your various spheres of activity, you may obtain mercy of God to be faithful; no one can tell how much your united labors will redound to the glory of God, and what amount of benefits will result from them to your fellow men. Let me then, before closing this address, speak a few words to you in the way of free and affectionate counsel.

And first of all, both in regard to your own personal welfare, and to your usefulness in the service of Christ, I urge upon each one of you, the *importance of making high attainments in holiness.*

How often I exhorted you to this while you were members of the seminary, you will not forget. I now repeat the exhortation with increased earnestness. It is one of my last counsels to you. And nothing can adequately show of what importance it is, but the revelations of the future world. Be then followers of Christ, who was holy, harmless, undefiled. Be holy men, free from the follies and corruptions of the world, and abounding in all the fruits of the Spirit. Keep in mind the necessity of experimental, spiritual religion — humble, watchful, fervent piety. This is what the Scripture calls, *walking with God — the life which is hid with Christ in God.* May all who have been members of this Seminary reach this high character! How salutary and how permanent an impress would they thus make upon the Christian and the heathen world! And if the publication, which I now dedicate to you, and this hearty counsel, together with my former efforts for your improvement, may contribute to your advancement in vital godliness, I shall feel that I have not lived and labored in vain.

In the next place, I would enjoin upon you the Christian duty of *loving one another.* It was regarded as an argument of no small weight in favor of establishing our Theological Seminary, that young men, being united in a peculiarly Christian society, pursuing their professional studies in the same place, and enjoying together the same literary and religious privileges, would be sure to form a special and permanent attachment to each other, which would produce in all respects a most happy influence upon themselves, and upon the churches and congregations that would enjoy their ministrations. This anticipation has, to some extent, been already realized. Would to God that it may be realized more perfectly! Let me then repeat the precious gospel precept — *Love one another* — not merely in the way of common respect, or civil intercourse, but as the apostle directs — "*Love one another with pure hearts fervently.*" "Be of the same mind;" "be perfectly joined together in the same judgment;" and whether you live in the same neighborhood or country, or in distant parts of the world, strive, by mutual sympathy, by brotherly correspondence, and by intercessory prayer, to alleviate each other's sorrows, to

encourage each other to persevering fidelity, and, in all respects, to promote each other's welfare. The Lord grant that you may know the happiness of being thus united in love!

As to matters of doctrine, I entreat you to keep at the greatest distance from all unscriptural speculations, and to repose unlimited confidence in the word of God. The minds of men at the present day are, to a fearful extent, in an unsettled state, and are reaching after something to satisfy a vain and restless curiosity. As there are new and useful inventions in natural things, men are striving to invent new theories in morals and religion. And as it is difficult to accomplish their object so long as they are tied to the same infallible standard, that is, the word of God; one of the first things attempted by those who wish to make innovations upon the common Orthodox system, is to call in question the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. This is generally the first step towards a fatal apostasy. There is, in my view, no ground of safety but a serious, unquestioning belief, resulting from thorough examination and Christian experience, that all Scripture is divinely inspired — that the whole Bible was written under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, and is consequently clothed with divine authority, and is infallible in all its teachings. Hold fast to this principle, and you are safe. If you either reject or doubt it — if you consider the whole or particular parts of the Bible, as written without any special direction of the Holy Spirit, or if you regard the inspiration of the sacred writers as of a similar nature with the inspiration of poets and orators — I say, if thoughts like these are suffered to lodge in your minds, you are standing on slippery places, and there is reason to fear that your feet will quickly slide.

A disbelief of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is generally found in those who are inclined to dissent from the common creed; and though it may sometimes arise from other motives, it is often adopted as an expedient to get rid of unpalatable doctrines. Beware then of that state of moral feeling which would render any of the teachings of revelation unpalatable. See to it that you have that renewed, spiritual mind, which discerns and loves the truth — which specially recognizes the doctrine, that we are by nature the children

of wrath; that in our fallen state we are not sufficient of ourselves to obtain salvation or to do anything acceptable to God, and that, unless we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we cannot see the kingdom of heaven—the doctrine that Christ, who is both God and man, died for our sins in our stead, and that his atoning blood secures to believers the forgiveness of sin and the blessedness of the world above. Shun every theological scheme, which gives an unscriptural prominence to the agency of man, and comparatively overlooks the agency of the divine Spirit. This, which was the leading principle of Pelagianism, is I apprehend, a prevalent error at the present day. On the other hand, I would, with equal earnestness, warn you against any such views of our dependence on God, as would interfere in the least with our free, accountable agency, or with our complete obligation to obey the law and the gospel. I warn you also against every scheme of religion which implies, that we are to expect salvation on account of the merit of our good affections or good works, instead of relying wholly upon the merits of Christ's obedience and death. On these and other essential points of Christian Theology, avoid all unscriptural views, and unscriptural representations, and maintain those doctrines of religion, which the experience of ages has shown to be best adapted to bring men to believe in the all-sufficient Saviour, and which, through the divine blessing, have had the greatest influence in promoting personal holiness, and genuine revivals of religion.

And here let me suggest a very necessary caution. It is a fact, that the greatest difficulties, and those which human reason is least able to obviate, exist in regard to doctrines which are of the greatest value, and which are supported by the most satisfactory evidence. I might instance in the eternal, uncaused existence of God, the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, the atonement, and the endless punishment of the impenitent. Now, if you should adopt the principle, that this or that doctrine is not to be believed because it is attended with insolvable difficulties, what would be the consequence? Evidently, that you would reject from your creed the most certain and the most important truths, and in the end be plunged in downright skepticism. I caution you to guard

against whatever would lead to so fatal a result, and particularly against the habit of looking off from the truths of religion, and from the clear evidence of those truths, and occupying your thoughts and your time with efforts to remove objections and cavils, which is very frequently a hopeless undertaking.

But I must not detain you. I have protracted these remarks, because I have felt that I am addressing you for the last time, and have been reluctant to take my leave of you. The remembrance of you, and my intercourse with you, will always be a source of pleasure to me. It is the desire of my heart, and my prayer to God, that you may grow in grace, that you may see the prosperity of the church, and that the peace which Jesus gives, may be yours in life and in death. And if you and I may at last have a place among the holy and happy in the kingdom of God, how sincerely shall we ascribe our salvation "to the praise of the glory of his grace!"

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

Leonard Woods

Andover, June 19, 1849.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

It has been deemed expedient, that the Lectures, here published, should appear in the form in which they were at first written and delivered, that is, in the form of *Lectures to young men preparing for the ministry.* This the author supposed would be most agreeable to the former members of the Seminary, while it would detract nothing from the acceptableness of the Lectures to others. Accordingly he has retained at the commencement of the course, the Directions, which were intended to aid students in the right prosecution of their studies. But the Lectures on *personal religion*, which were always delivered to the Junior class, before they entered on the study of systematic Theology, are here, in compliance with what is common in systems of Divinity, placed at the end of the course.

Several of the common topics of theology are omitted, and some others treated very briefly. But it is not to be inferred from this circumstance, either that those topics are considered to be of small consequence, or that they were passed over lightly in the Lecture room. The Author has judged it best, in this publication, instead of attempting to make out a particular discussion of every branch of Theology, to attend chiefly to those subjects, which

he considered as of the highest importance, especially at the present day. In regard to those subjects which are not here particularly considered, he will only say, there are various well known works, in which they are treated judiciously, and at full length — to which he is happy to refer the reader.

It will be seen that free quotations are occasionally made from other writers. But besides this, the Author, in common with religious teachers in general, has endeavored, on all subjects, to derive benefit from those who have lived before him. But in a multitude of instances, it would now be impossible for him to distinguish between what was first suggested to him by the books he had read, and what resulted from his own reflections.

It was once the author's intention to include in the Lectures a History of Doctrines. But he found it would unduly increase the size of the publication; and he was content to leave that matter in the hands of those writers, who possess superior qualifications for such an arduous undertaking. For himself, he has thought that, if he could contribute anything to the benefit of those who are pursuing the knowledge of divine truth, it must be, chiefly, by freely disclosing to them *his own manner of thinking on religious subjects — by telling them plainly his own belief, and how he reasons in support of it, and how he obviates objections and difficulties.*

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THEOLOGICAL LECTURES.

LECTURE I.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE RIGHT PROSECUTION OF THEOLOGICAL STUDY.

I KNOW not how I can more properly commence a course of Lectures to young men preparing for the sacred office, than by offering some directions to them for the right prosecution of theological study. To give such directions will be my particular object in this and the following introductory Lectures.

The first direction which I offer is, that you would *make the truth itself the object of your inquiries.* Let no one prosecute his studies from an ambitious desire for distinction, or from the mere impulse of natural curiosity, or from prepossession in favor of any particular theory, or, chiefly, for the sake of the intellectual pleasure which he may enjoy in contemplating what is beautiful and sublime in moral objects. Let your regard be to *divine truth itself.* Love its pure and holy nature. Love the impress of God which it bears. And remember that all error respecting moral and religious subjects is adverse to the divine perfections. Truth is great and will prevail; while by the increasing light of the divine administration, all error will at length be exposed and confounded. Have a regard also to the obligations which result from the truth, and the influence which our belief must have upon our practice. Forget not that our conduct will be right or wrong, very much as it is directed by a right or wrong religious faith.

Secondly. Having fixed it in your minds, that the truth itself is to be the great object of your inquiries, pursue this object *with candor and impartiality; with liberality and independence; with laborious and thorough investigation; and with patience and perseverance.*

Pursue, then, the knowledge of the truth with *candor and impartiality.* When any proposition is laid down, inquire with an *unbiassed* mind, what can be offered for it, and what against it. Let no prejudice render you inattentive to the reasoning of your opponent. Let no wish for the confutation of his scheme render you unjust or partial. Acknowledge frankly the strength of his objections against your opinions, and of his arguments in favor of his own. Acknowledge, without reluctance, any defect or inconclusiveness that may be made to appear in the reasoning, on which you had been wont to rely. Prize every ray of light cast on the subject of inquiry, from whatever quarter it may come, and to whatever result it may lead. Keep in mind, that the light, which shall reveal to you the falsity of any opinion which you have heretofore believed, or the truth of any which you have disbelieved, really helps you to reach the great object, at which you should aim in all your studies.

Pursue that object with a *liberal and independent mind.* By liberality, I mean freedom from bigotry — freedom from all contracted views and narrowness of feeling — a habit of thinking upon a large scale, and of forming our judgments upon a comprehensive view of things. And the independence of mind which I would recommend, is that which preserves a student from being overawed by the authority of uninspired men, whether living or dead, and leads him, with firmness, tempered with modesty, to embrace sentiments which are, in his view, well supported, though rejected by men of the most celebrated character, and contrary to the strongest current of popular opinion. In this cause, the Christian of an independent mind suffers no fetters to bind him. He submits to no authority but the authority of God, the author of reason and revelation. He is above the fear of consequences. Come honor or dishonor, life or death, he will follow the guidance of divine truth.

Accustom yourselves also to *laborious and thorough investigation.* No man, certainly no man of talents and liberal education, ought to take things upon trust, or be satisfied with a superficial view of any important subject. Some persons, either from indolence, or a habit of treating their own minds with softness and delicacy, are averse to deep investigation. They feel a reluctance to inquire into any subject with intenseness of thought. Forever cast off this indolence ; and form a habit of applying all your powers to the subject before you. Be not afraid of injuring your faculties by close application. The strength of the mind is constantly augmented by exertion. Every hour of vigorous and well directed study, not only makes an accession to the present stock of knowledge, but enlarges the capacity for future acquisitions. And never admit the thought, that the most thorough investigation will injure the cause of truth. Going a little beyond the shallowness of vulgar minds, creates difficulties, and frequently makes men skeptics. But honest and thorough examination lays open the evidence of the truth, and brings them back to faith.

Be *patient and persevering* in your inquiries. Will you turn back from the pursuit of sacred knowledge, because it appears distant, and much study is necessary to its attainment ? Is it a mark of a manly spirit, to grow weary of honorable and useful labor ? Can you expect that a few starts will carry you to the goal, and gain you the prize ? In the acquisition of divine knowledge, patience must have its perfect work. You must submit to the labor of digging deep, if you would find the precious ore. In this pursuit let no difficulties discourage you. Let your resolution never yield. The treasure you are seeking, is worthy of the most diligent and persevering efforts. It is a treasure which may be found, and, when found, will more than compensate all your exertion. Suppose that after much study, you sometimes find yourself in a state of uncertainty, and subjects of vast importance are covered with doubt and obscurity. Is this a reason why you should relax your efforts, and despair of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion ? What if Bacon and Newton, Luther and Calvin, and the other great lights of philosophy and religion, had been

governed by such an irresolute, desponding temper? Will you yield to a timidity and sloth, which would have prevented the light of truth from shining upon Protestant nations, and which would soon leave those nations to be again overspread with as dark a cloud as formerly covered them? Press on then in the search of divine truth. And be not disheartened, if, in some instances, you have not been so successful as you expected. This failure may have happened, because you have not yet arrived at the region of clear light. You may not have accomplished the preparatory work which is necessary. Your mind may not be prepared for discovering the higher truth sought, by the knowledge which is previously requisite. Or you may not have pursued the proper course, and you may have failed of reaching the object, not because you have not travelled far enough, but because you have not travelled in the right direction. Or you may, perhaps, have been in the pursuit of knowledge, which is unattainable, and which, could it be attained, would be of no use. If you find this last to have been the case, you have nothing to do, but to turn your attention to other subjects, on which time and attention may be more profitably expended. But if you are in pursuit of truth which is knowable, truth which ought to be known, and which may be applied to useful purposes, especially if it has a connection with the business of your profession; let nothing discourage you. You may find it expedient to change the mode of inquiry. You may be convinced that more humility, more diligence, more prayer is necessary; or that you ought to have a more perfect knowledge of previous principles in ethics and theology. But whatever alteration is necessary in the method of study, never give way to discouragement. A resolved and persevering spirit conquers all things. Be content to ascend the hill of sacred science with hard labor. But be sure to make some advances every day; and however slow your progress, rest not before you reach the summit.

Thirdly. *Make a proper use of all the means in your power.* In the pursuit of divine knowledge, you may derive assistance from every branch of science, and from every event of life. Only keep your mind in the incessant pursuit of improvement, and there is

nothing which may not cast some light on the subjects of your study. You can converse with no person, from whom you may not obtain benefit. Either the wisdom or the folly of his conversation, either the uprightness or the obliquity of his behavior, may be turned to your instruction. And you may obtain benefit from every author. Does the pure light of truth shine in his doctrine? Receive that light into your understanding and heart. Does he teach pernicious error? Then learn what error is. Learn what you can of its false attractions, its sophistical arguments, its subtle arts, its disposition to change its shape, to conceal itself and even to mix with truth, for the promotion of its own cause. By thorough examination of systems of error, you may be enabled more clearly to illustrate, and more unanswerably to defend, the faith once delivered to the saints. Systems of error will always be found to contain a portion of fundamental truth. By decorating itself with some of the charms of truth, error is perpetually contriving to allay our fears, and, unsuspected, to gain admittance to our hearts. Erroneous books, written on such principles, are indeed imposing, and, to the unthinking multitude, generally pernicious. But to those students, who examine profoundly, and distinguish clearly, such books may sometimes be among the most valuable helps. They may cast light upon points, which better books have left in obscurity. They may show you, that the system which you have received for truth, is not without faults. They may teach you what its faults are, and how to correct them. From erroneous authors you may learn what ground is defensible, and how great a loss the friends of truth have suffered, by attempting to defend what after all must be abandoned. You will see how much they have hurt the cause of truth, and what advantage they have given to opposers, by encumbering it with any fragments of error, as well as by attempting to support it by weak and inconclusive arguments. Thus the advocates of error may help you to perfect your religious faith, and to guard against the attacks of errorists for time to come.

Disdain, therefore, the narrowness of mind, which would deprive you of any important advantage, and give yourselves to a fair and

thorough examination, not only of those authors who exhibit the theology of the Bible, but of those also, who teach the various systems of error both ancient and modern, always keeping your mind open for the reception of truth, even though it may proceed from the pen of a heretic, and may be ever so artfully interwoven with a system of falsehood; and always, with the most watchful solicitude, closing every avenue to your understanding and heart against error, though it may put on the highest attractions of genius and literature, and may place itself in company with the most certain and momentous truths.

Fourthly. *Make the Bible the only standard of moral and religious truth.* Uninspired books may contain the truth; may clearly teach the doctrines, and forcibly inculcate the laws of the Christian religion. Still they are not to be read, as though they were infallible. We may call in question any sentiment they contain, and, if we find it contrary to the Scriptures, we are bound to reject it. No uninspired man has any proper authority to bind our faith; and no one is entitled to our implicit, unlimited confidence.

Make the Bible the rule of your faith in contradistinction to common opinion. There is no probability, that the generality of men, in their present condition, will think correctly on religious subjects. Nor does the Spirit of God, which sanctifies the hearts of believers, afford any security that *their* belief will, in all respects, be perfectly right. Who can say, that a thousand or ten thousand Christians, even the wisest and best, will never be united in embracing some particular error? I do not say this to diminish your reverence for the religious doctrines, which have been generally held by the church of Christ. To reject those doctrines rashly, or in any way to treat them with contempt, is a sure proof of insufferable pride, or determined heresy. Still, neither the church at large, nor any portion of it is infallible; and we are never to consider its doctrines as the foundation of our faith. If, after long and impartial examination, we find that any of the doctrines, held by ministers and Christians of past ages, are not conformed to the word of God, we not only have a right but are obliged in duty to withhold our assent.

The Bible is our ultimate standard in contradistinction to mere human reason. Our reason is indeed to be employed, not in originating or forming a system of religion, but in understanding that which is revealed in the Scriptures. And this is only saying, that revelation is addressed to rational beings, and that they must make use of their rational faculties to understand it. If human reason, uninstructed by revelation, is made the ultimate standard of religious truth, it must be either your own reason, or the reason of some other individuals, or the reason of some particular body of men, or of mankind taken collectively. Now your own individual reason cannot consistently be made the standard of truth. For what is there in *your* reason, that entitles it to this distinction? Have you never found it subject to weakness, to confusion, and to error? And can you imagine that your reason, so liable to mistakes heretofore, will be infallible in its future operations? And why should you depend upon your own reason in preference to the reason of others? You may perhaps say, that your reason is a sufficient guide for *yourself*, though not for others. But do not *you* need a guide of as high qualifications, as any other man? It may however be insisted on, that every man's reason must necessarily be his own standard. If this is really the case, then mankind, while embracing ten thousand different and clashing opinions, may all be conformed to a sure and sufficient standard, in case each one follows the guidance of his own reason. What then can be meant by a standard? Or what is its use? Do you still say, that the reason of some individual, or of some society of men, is to be regarded as a sure guide in matters of religion? But who shall make the selection of that distinguished individual or society, or who shall determine which of the numberless selections that would be made, possesses the highest reason, and best deserves your confidence? Will you make the selection yourself, or will you trust others to make it for you? Do any still think, that the whole body of professing Christians, or the whole race of human beings, taken collectively, will supply a reason or intelligence of so high a character, that it may be safely considered as a standard? The difficulty still remains. For how

can you discover what the reason of the whole body of professing Christians is? Look here ever so anxiously for an intelligence to guide you, and all you can find will be an endless number of opinions and judgments standing in opposition to each other.

Thus in our most important concerns we should be left without any safe guide, and be in a state of darkness and doubt, had we not the infallible word of God. Make this then the only standard of your religious opinions. Let your faith receive all its lessons from the oracles of God. What the Bible teaches either directly, or by certain consequence, is to be admitted as divinely true, how much soever it may clash with the dictates of mere human reason. For after all, what is the weak, erring reason of creatures, who are of yesterday and know nothing, compared with the infinite intelligence of God? Let it then be fixed in your minds that every doctrine of the Bible is to be received on this one principle, that God, who cannot lie, has declared it. That we should proceed on this principle is, in reality, what our reason, if *unperverted*, must fully approve. Human reason, in a rectified state, must be conscious of its own imperfection, and must see it to be just and right to rely upon the perfect wisdom of God — to receive instruction from the infinite infallible reason of the divine mind. Acting on this principle, we are so far from undervaluing reason, that we implicitly follow its dictates. *Our* reason looks to *divine* reason as its unerring guide. Hence in following the dictates of divine reason, we really do what our own reason requires. In this view, I readily concede that our faith must be settled by reason — not ultimately by the fallible reason of man, but by the infallible reason of the divine mind. In the holy Scriptures that infallible, divine reason deigns to be our guide. He that refuses such a guide, and gives himself up merely to the direction of his own erring understanding, acts against right reason. And as he prefers obscure twilight to noonday; the darkness of doubt and error, instead of the light of truth, shall be his miserable portion. "In reviewing the most mysterious doctrines of revelation," Dr. Alexander says, "the ultimate appeal is to reason; not to determine whether she could have discovered these truths; not to declare whether considered

in themselves they appear probable; but to decide whether it is not more reasonable to believe what God speaks, than to confide in our own crude and feeble conceptions." — Again he says; "No doctrine can be a proper object of our faith, which it is not more reasonable to believe than to reject."

If any man receive not the Bible as a perfect guide to his faith, he implicitly denies either that God has intended to give such a guide, or that he is capable of executing his purpose. Either will prove him an infidel. Indeed every man must be regarded as virtually an infidel, who does not yield a cordial submission to the holy Scriptures. There is no middle course. A man's pretending in general terms to believe the Scriptures, does not constitute him a believer. Nor does a man's devoting himself to the study of the Bible, and undertaking the work of a gospel minister, constitute him a believer. As all true love to God, must be supreme love; so every one who has real, consistent faith in the Bible, must have entire faith — must believe it to be just such a revelation from Heaven, as it professes to be, and must submit his reason to it, as the ultimate and perfect standard of his faith. If any man falls short of this speculatively, he is a speculative infidel; if practically, a practical infidel.

Here then we rest. The Bible is the infallible and the only infallible rule of our faith. This is the grand point for which the Reformers contended, the fundamental principle of Protestantism. Amid all the disagreeing opinions of the church and the world, this principle quiets the mind. It simplifies our work; so that we have nothing to do, but to hear what Jehovah speaks. If any theories, however plausible, are not consentaneous to the spirit of revelation, we cannot receive them. If, for instance, an author speaks of the influence of education, or example, or moral suasion, or the association of ideas, or habit, or any other principle, as accounting for the formation of a virtuous or religious character, without regard to what the Bible teaches of the moral corruption of man, and the agency of the Holy Spirit; or if the description which he gives of the Saviour, is inconsistent with those characters of divinity with which he is honored in the Bible; or if he

teaches anything on repentance and a good life, or on the readiness of God, to save sinners, or on the rule of future retribution, which overlooks the Scripture doctrines of reconciliation by the blood of Christ, of justification by faith, and of salvation by grace; what have we to do with such an author? His theory may indeed be planned with ingenuity, and written with elegance. But as it does not correspond with the teachings of Scripture, it deserves no more regard than heathen fables, or the dreams of fanaticism. On the other hand, let a writer make a representation of human corruption inconsistent with man's criminality and his undiminished obligation to obey the divine law; or let him make a representation of the purposes of God inconsistent with the all-sufficiency of the atonement, the unlimited offer of salvation, and the attainableness of it to all who enjoy the gospel; or let him give such a representation of salvation by grace and the perseverance of the saints, as countenances sin, or supersedes the necessity of obedience and watchful diligence; what have we to do with such a writer? It is sufficient, that his teachings are not according to the Bible. Other arguments are needless. Thus making the Bible the sole and perfect standard of our faith, would free us at once from half our labors and perplexities, would prevent waste of time, would lead to an end of controversy, and would ultimately produce complete satisfaction and harmony on every religious subject.

My fifth and last direction is this. *In all your inquiries after the truth, seek the illumination of the Holy Spirit.*

"Ask and ye shall receive. Seek and ye shall find." The Bible abundantly asserts, that the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit, and ascribes all saving knowledge to divine teaching. It is the Spirit which guides men into all the truth. The sum of it is, that all spiritual knowledge is and must be given by the same divine agent that inspired the Scriptures. Human reason in its present perverted state, can no more understand revelation aright without the inward teaching of the Spirit, than it can safely guide us without revelation. This necessity of divine teaching, so often asserted in the Scriptures, is confirmed by the present state of the human mind. The judgment is biassed, reason

misguided, and the light of the soul obscured, by unholy affection. And can it be expected that man in such a state will rightly understand the things of religion. Who knows not that reason, darkened by sin, is always prone to err? And how pernicious moreover must be the influence of such a world as this! What probability is there, that one so corrupt himself, and so allured and impelled by the opinions and practices of those around him, wil understand and receive the truth? Admit that a clear light shines in the word of God. What will this avail to those, who live in a world that lieth in darkness, and who love darkness rather than light?

The necessity of divine teaching is also evident from *the nature of divine truth.* Intellectual objects may be discerned by mere intellect. But spiritual objects, such as the excellence of God, the holiness of His law, the evil of sin, the glory of Christ — such objects cannot be rightly discerned, except by the spiritual eye; they cannot be truly known without being loved. "He that loveth, knoweth God." Without this spiritual discernment, no instruction, no ardor of curiosity, no diligence in study, can enable a man spiritually to know and believe the truths of the gospel. Now as we are naturally destitute of this spiritual discernment, we can never apprehend the truth aright, unless we are taught of God.

Finally, this necessity of divine teaching is plainly taught by facts. How has it been with mankind at large, who have followed the dictates of their own minds, without the illumination of the Holy Spirit? I need not descant upon the errors of the heathen. How has it been with those who have enjoyed revelation? Is there any form of error, which has not prevailed among them? The saving knowledge of divine truth has been confined to a small number, who have relied on the heavenly teacher. As to the rest, their understanding has been darkened, their heart blinded. Notwithstanding all their advantages to know the truth, they have been carried about by every wind of doctrine, and have been ready to fall in with everything, but the true religion. Consider particularly the mistakes and delusions of men distinguished for talents and erudition. Consider most of all, the case of those, who have

devoted themselves to the study of theology, but have had no proper impression of their liability to mistake, and their need of divine illumination. Let the errors of Origen teach you. Let the still more flagrant errors of Priestly, and the whole race of philosophical Christians, teach you. Are you in no danger from the pride of reason and the corruption of the heart?—in no danger from the desire of distinction, from the plausibility and subtlety of heretical writers, or from the errors and delusions of the world? If you lean to your own understanding and forget your dependence upon God, you have no safeguard against any kind of error. Look then to him who is the light of the world. Follow him, and you shall not walk in darkness. It is not in vain, that he has promised his Spirit, to guide his disciples into the truth. At the beginning of every book, and every subject, remember what you are, and on whom you depend. Remember it every morning and every night. Remember it when you read the Scriptures, when you converse, and when you hear. Let the devout recollection of it pervade all your studies. Sit humbly at the feet of him, who will guide the meek in judgment. Count all other knowledge dross, compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Do this, and the Holy Spirit will take of the things of Christ, and show them unto you.

The truth of the foregoing remarks may be illustrated by the experience of two men of distinguished character, Spinoza and Huss.

The account which Spinoza gives of himself is as follows: "When experience had taught me, that what is generally talked of among men, was vain and empty; when I saw that all which I used to fear or love, was neither good nor bad in itself, but only so far as the mind is affected by it; I concluded at last to search, whether there was any true good which would communicate itself, and by which, if I should renounce everything else, my mind might be influenced; whether there was anything by which, if I should find it and possess myself of it, I might attain to an eternal and supreme happiness. I say I concluded at last; for at first it seemed unreasonable to lose a certain thing for an uncertain one. For I perceived the advantages connected with honor and riches,

and that I should have to renounce them, if I should pursue a different object. And it was plain to me, that if supreme happiness consisted in them, I should lose that happiness in pursuing a different end; but if happiness did not consist in them, and I should seek them supremely, I should lose it in that way. I then reasoned, whether it was not possible for me to enter upon my new work, or at least to come to some certainty on the point, without leaving my old course of life. But that I tried in vain. For that which is generally the topic of men's conversation, and that which (judging from their conduct) they esteem most highly, comes at last to these three things, riches, honor, pleasure. But these things so distract the mind, that it can think seriously of no other good. When I therefore saw that all this was inconsistent with my new project, and even opposed to it, so that I should necessarily have to relinquish one of these two things, I was compelled to decide which I should prefer. It was not without reason that I used the words, *if I only could consider it seriously:* for although I saw it all clear before my mind, yet could I never on that account lay aside all avarice, ambition, and love of pleasure."

Unhappy Spinoza! whose proud and earthly mind, turning away from the heavenly teacher, wandered about in darkness and distress, and was "like the troubled sea which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt."

Now look at John Huss. "I confess before God and his anointed," he said, "that from my youth up I doubted and hesitated long as to what I should choose; whether I should praise what all praised, approve what all approved, and excuse what all excused; and whether I should gloss over the Scriptures, as others glossed them over, who seemed to be clothed with sanctity and wisdom, or whether I ought manfully to accuse and condemn the unfruitful works of darkness; whether I should do better to enjoy a comfortable life with the rest, and seek for honor and preferments, or else go out without the camp, cleave to the pure and holy truth of the gospel, and bear the poverty and reproach of Christ. I confess freely, I doubted and hesitated long. At last, I turned to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincere

and fervent supplication. I took my Bible into my hands, and raising it up towards heaven, I cried out with my whole heart — O God, my Lord, Author of my life, and Father of lights, illuminate my mind, teach me to know and love the pure doctrines of thy word, and guide me into all thy truth."

Happy man! brought at last to seek instruction where it could be found, and to rest in the pure truth, taught him by the word and the Spirit of God.

LECTURE II.

INCOMPREHENSIBLENESS OF THE SUBJECTS OF REVELATION.

It is on all accounts important, that you who are devoted to the improvement of the mind, and to the service of the church, should be freed from undue confidence in your own understanding. And, in order to this, you must carefully ascertain the bounds which God has set to your intelligence. And it is important that you should not only ascertain those bounds, but that you should be content with them. And to be thus content, you must keep in mind, that the measure of intelligence which our Creator has given us, is exactly suited to the end of our being. This end does not require, that we should completely comprehend either the Creator, or the creation. Were we called to exercise dominion over the universe, it would indeed be necessary that we should be omniscient. But for those, whose business it is to obey and submit, omniscience is not necessary.

To prepare the way for a candid and profitable investigation of Christian Theology, I shall employ your thoughts for a time on the incomprehensibleness of the subjects of revelation, and on the principles and rules suggested by this property of divine truth, for the regulation of our studies and our faith.

The proposition to be illustrated is this, namely; *in a divine revelation subjects must be exhibited, which are above our comprehension.* Our reason can neither determine beforehand what things ought to be revealed, nor fully comprehend them after they are revealed.

You may think that the terms of this proposition involve an

absurdity, implying that things may be revealed or made known, which are not made known. But the difficulty is merely apparent, and will vanish on the slightest examination. We may discover the truth and certainty of many propositions, although the nature of the particular subject to which those propositions relate, is, in other respects, more or less unknown. What is really revealed, we may understand. But there are properties and relations of the subject, which are not revealed, and which, therefore, cannot be understood. "Experience," says a sensible writer, "has taught us to make a difference between discerning the existence and some properties of things, so as to apply them to use, and fully comprehending their natures. One instance of this is in the curious productions of human art; the external appearances and effects of which are seen by the most ignorant person, while the inward composition, situation, and movements of the parts, which are the causes of those appearances, may be entirely unknown. Another instance is in our knowledge of nature. Our senses perceive the exterior face of corporeal beings, our reason and observation enable us to understand many of their properties, relations and uses. But there is an internal constitution, upon which those properties, relations and uses depend, which no human understanding is able perfectly to find out. In like manner, we may easily apprehend the difference between understanding that which may be known of God, because he has manifested it to us, and fully comprehending the infinity of his attributes."

These remarks are intended to prepare the way for the arguments which will be adduced to support the proposition, and to forestall in part, an objection which may meet us at the threshold. The objection is, that making known objects above human reason, can be of no use to rational beings. "Our minds," says the objector, "lose themselves in the contemplation of such subjects, and are involved in obscurity. Is it not better to apply our minds to subjects level to their powers?" Now, I hope to make it evident, that incomprehensible subjects may be of great utility, and that the highest utility can be attached to no other.

First. *Incomprehensible subjects may be of great utility.* Un-

questionably it may be useful for us to know the truth, especially on those subjects which immediately concern our welfare. To know the truth may unquestionably have a salutary influence upon our conduct. And why should it have a less salutary influence, because it relates to things which are, in some respects, incomprehensible? Why should it not be useful to know *some* truths, though we do not know *all* truths? Suppose an angel from heaven declares to the inhabitants of a city, or a part of them, that at such a time the city will be destroyed by an eruption from the earth, or by fire and brimstone rained down from heaven. Seasonable knowledge of such an event would certainly be of great consequence to the citizens, although there might be a variety of inscrutable mysteries attending the subject, and the revelation of it. In the first place, they might not know the peculiar nature of the angel; nor, secondly, how an incorporeal being could appear in human form; how he could understand human language, and utter a human voice. Thirdly; they might not know how the knowledge of this future event was imparted to him. Fourthly; they might not know why this city should be destroyed at that particular time. Fifthly; they might not know how fire and brimstone could be produced in the atmosphere, or what could be the cause of such an eruption from the earth. But notwithstanding these mysterious things in the revelation, things which might be the subject of much profound and puzzling inquiry, the simple knowledge of the fact would be of great consequence. The mysteries in this case follow from the nature and circumstances of the subject.

I repeat the question; why should the knowledge of moral and religious truth have a less salutary influence, because it relates to subjects which we do not fully understand? Weigh the matter well, and you will need no further remarks from me to enable you to form a right judgment. If, then, the knowledge of particular truths may be of such use; the revelation of those truths may be of great importance to us, whatever else may be unrevealed. The particular truths revealed may be those, in which our chief interest lies; while other things, not revealed, may be less interesting to

us, or may not concern us at all in the present state. And they may, moreover, be of such a nature, that bringing them to view in a revelation, would only occasion new perplexity and darkness.

The publication of one single practical truth may be of infinite consequence to men, though everything else respecting the subject is unknown. Thus, in the first ages, it was indescribably important to mankind to know the simple truth, that there was to be a Saviour; although they were left, in a great measure, ignorant of the peculiarities of his character, the time of his advent, the manner in which he would confer his blessings, and the nature and glory of his kingdom.

As to the practical utility of a particular truth, it matters not whether we fail of knowing other things respecting the subject, because it is the sovereign pleasure of God to hide them from our view, or because they are from their nature unknowable. No man of reason is ever influenced, in the affairs of common life, by any of these circumstances; and no man of piety is thus influenced in the affairs of religion. What Christian will disbelieve the moral character of God, because he finds difficulties attending it, which are not solved by revelation, and which may arise necessarily from the nature of the subject? Who can justify himself in the neglect of those sacred principles, the truth of which is fully attested, and which are capable of being applied to the most salutary purposes, because there are some other things which he does not know? Who will abandon his faith in God, and his affectionate meditations on his attributes, because he cannot by searching find him out to perfection?

But it is not only a fact, that truths relating to incomprehensible objects may be of great utility; but that the highest utility can be attached to no other. For on inquiry, it will appear that all the most momentous and useful truths relate to objects which are pre-eminently incomprehensible; and that, if you descend to truths relating to objects which are not incomprehensible (if there be any such,) you descend to those which are insignificant.

That the subjects of which the Bible treats, and to which its doctrines relate, must be incomprehensible, will be perfectly clear,

if, with your eye upon the nature of those subjects, you consider the sources of our knowledge. Inquire then, whether the particular sources of our knowledge are such as to afford us any adequate conception of those subjects, which are brought to view in the Scriptures. Can we, by the use of any of our faculties, or any of our means of knowledge, attain to a complete knowledge of the divine character? We cannot do this by our senses; for unless God is material, he cannot be an object of our senses. Can we then attain to a perfect knowledge of God by our rational faculties? It is granted, that we have certain knowledge of our own existence, as rational beings, and that we may have certain knowledge of the existence of other rational beings. But suppose the mode of their existence to be essentially different from ours. By what means can that peculiar mode of existence be made known to us? All we can learn by consciousness is that which belongs to ourselves. We know, for example, that we exist in time — that we are older to-day than we were yesterday, and that we are dependent upon a power above us. But how can the knowledge of our own existence, which is of such a nature, help us to know the mode of the being of God, who does not exist in time, but inhabits eternity; of whom it cannot be said, that he is older to-day than he was yesterday; and of whose existence there was no cause, and no beginning? That we may by consciousness obtain any adequate notion of the peculiar mode of the divine existence, we must either exist in the same mode, or have a new kind of consciousness. As we now are, every attempt to conceive of the peculiar mode of the divine existence is as absurd and as fruitless, as for a man born blind to attempt to form an idea of the colors of the rainbow, or for an insect to attempt to know how a rational mind acts.

We are conscious that we have knowledge, and that we obtain and exercise it under particular limitations, and in a particular manner. But how can an acquaintance with our own mode of intelligence, even if it should become much more perfect than it is, make us acquainted with a mode of intelligence, so exceedingly different as that of God? How can we form any adequate conception of the knowledge of a Being, to whose mind all things are

eternally and unchangeably present, who gains no information either by study, reflection, or observation; who knows perfectly all minds and all hearts in the universe, without using any means of knowledge, and, without any senses, knows perfectly the nature and properties of those bodies, which are the objects of our senses? There is nothing within us or without us, that can give us any proper conception of the peculiar manner, in which an omniscient and immutable spirit knows.

Similar observations might be made respecting the other divine attributes.

But there is a shorter proof. Admit what is far beyond the truth, that we could perfectly comprehend ourselves, and other beings of a finite nature; still as our intellectual capacity is limited, unlimited objects must be beyond our comprehension. Infinity must be above the reach of what is finite.

If these things are so, then a revelation which teaches anything concerning the self-existent, eternal, omniscient God, must of course relate to a subject which will forever transcend our comprehension.

In regard to the character of Christ, which is another leading subject of revelation, we find all and more than all the incomprehensibility, which we have just contemplated. For the Bible teaches that Christ is not only the everlasting God, but also a man. The constitution of the person of Christ is exceedingly diverse from anything which exists among human beings. How two natures, so infinitely different, can be united in one person; how Christ can be so constituted, that we can properly say of him, that he is God, by whom all things were made, and yet that he is a child, that he is a man, that he suffers and dies — this is a matter which lies entirely beyond our reach. It plainly follows, therefore, that what the Bible teaches respecting the constitution of Christ, must be attended with mystery which is past finding out.

The other subject of revelation which I shall here notice is, *the works of God.* And with respect to these, there are three points, on which our reason must fail of forming adequate conceptions. First, the particular reasons why God chose such a system. Second, the peculiar manner of his working. Third, the nature and connections of the works themselves.

The *reasons* of the system which God has adopted, lie in his own infinite perfections. He chose such a system, because he saw that it was suitable to his own attributes, and that, taken in its whole extent and duration, it would accomplish the best purposes. This system is in fact perfectly wise and good, if it has these properties, namely, if it is perfectly suited to the divine attributes, and is adapted to accomplish the best ends. Now the very fact, that the present system is perfectly wise and good, clearly implies that it is far above our comprehension. As the excellence of the system consists essentially in its adaptedness to the perfections of God; it must in this respect be as really incomprehensible to us, as those perfections are. For how can we determine what system of things will be suited to the divine attributes, unless we have a perfect knowledge of those attributes?

Again; we are incompetent judges of the goodness of the system which God has chosen, because we do not and cannot know its whole extent. A man, whose knowledge should be confined to a small village, would be a very incompetent judge of the interests of a large kingdom. And if his knowledge should extend to a single kingdom, and should stop there, he would be very incompetent to judge of the interests of a large number of kingdoms united. The same as to the subject before us. Could we know ever so perfectly any particular part of the system of God's works, even so large a part as the world we inhabit, we should still be incompetent judges of the goodness of the whole system taken together. For that which would appear to be a fault in one part, taken by itself, might be an excellence, if that part is taken in connection with all the other parts. It is then manifest that, until we have a perfect knowledge of the whole extent of the creation, we cannot be competent judges of the particular reasons why such a system was adopted.

But suppose we had a comprehensive view of the whole extent of the creation, at the present time, we should still be incompetent to judge of the wisdom and goodness of the system, or of the particular reasons of its being chosen, unless we could have a perfect view of its operations and results in all future time.

The system is to continue forever. This is a matter of inconceivable consequence, and must be taken into the account in order to a right judgment of the reasons why it was adopted. For it is easy to see, that a system which is designed for endless duration, must in various respects be different from one designed for a short continuance. If designed to be of a short continuance, it must be so contrived, that all the good intended, shall be effected in a short time. In the other case, the allwise Contriver may judge it best, that the good intended shall be effected gradually — that the system shall advance perpetually from one degree of glory to another. It must be so. Accordingly the excellence of the system must be estimated, not by its present appearances — not by the good already accomplished, but by its everlasting results — by the whole amount of good which will be effected in an endless futurity. Of this amount no one can judge, without knowing perfectly the properties, relations, and operations of all parts of the universe, and foreseeing every event that will take place, and every instance of good that will be brought about, through eternal ages. And who that falls short of omniscience, can make any approximation to this unbounded knowledge?

You perceive then that the very fact, that the system which God has chosen is perfectly wise and good, necessarily implies, that it exceeds all finite comprehension. To be wise and good in the highest degree, it must be founded in reasons which can be comprehended by omniscience only. To suppose it founded in reasons within the reach of the human understanding, is to suppose it imperfect. If it should be merely commensurate with the limited intellect of creatures, it would be unsuitable to the divine perfections, and to the great end of the divine administration. I repeat the important truth, that if the system of creation is so contrived, as to agree with the views of infinite wisdom, and secure the object of infinite benevolence, it must be founded in reasons inscrutable to man.

A second point, on which reason fails of forming adequate views, is *the peculiar manner of the divine operation.* If we could have a perfect knowledge of our own manner of exercising

power, this would not imply that we are capable of comprehending the manner of divine operation. For there are several characteristics in our agency, which remove it to the greatest distance from the agency of God. First, we act dependently, or by power derived from another. This is a truth of which we have continual notice. It is very obvious, that the effects usually connected with our volitions, instead of being produced by any proper and independent efficiency in us, depend ultimately and entirely on the will of a superior Being. We are instruments in the hands of him who made us. And though we are voluntary, active, and powerful instruments, we are as dependent as though we were without action, without volition, and without power. We have never known in ourselves, or in others, any instance in which the effects produced by action, and the action itself, did not depend ultimately on the will of God. In these circumstances, what idea can we form of an agency absolutely independent — an agency which can be neither suspended nor varied by any other power?

Our agency terminates upon things already made. We have power to change the form and situation of bodies, and the state of minds to which we have access. This is all we can do. *Creative* power, or that which originates existence, either physical or spiritual, is widely different in its nature, from the power which belongs to us. We do not fail of putting forth a creative act, because our power is not great enough in degree. Any supposable increase of power, such as we possess, would bring us no nearer to an ability to create. There is no action of dependent beings which bears any real likeness to the act of creative power. The act of creating is so far above *our* manner of working, and so inconceivable, that many philosophers have denied the possibility of it; and we must all deny the possibility of creation, unless we admit what is incomprehensible. For who can understand how God causes that to be, which before was not? It is granted, that God is not material, or has not matter in himself. Now how can he produce that which he has not in himself, except in the way of derivation from something without him? But if he derives any thing from some other thing, he does not create it. And if it is

inconceivable how God creates things, great or small, it is still more inconceivable how he does it without anything like what we call an *effort* — how he creates by a word, saying, let there be light, let there be a universe, with instantaneous efficacy. The exertion of the power of God has nothing like human labor. A great work is as easy to him as a small one, — to create a world, as to move a leaf. The exercise of his power in the highest instances imaginable, for millions of ages without interruption, is attended with no degree of weariness. He continually bears up mountains, earth, sun, planets, worlds, without fatigue or need of rest. And if he willed to enlarge the creation a thousand fold, it would be done as soon as willed. No man can turn his thoughts seriously to this subject, without being convinced, that the peculiar manner in which God exercises power, is infinitely removed from the ken of human reason.

It might be made to appear, in many other ways, that the manner of God's working is inscrutable. How can God be, and continue to be, the cause of all things — the universal, all powerful agent; while yet there are so many other beings, living, moving, and existing in him, who have a real agency and responsibility of their own? How can God work in believers both to will and to do, while his agency is concealed, and they are properly conscious of nothing but their own agency? How can he foreordain the existence of moral evil, and so arrange and govern things that it will actually take place, while yet he gives it no countenance, forbids it by his law, and will inflict endless punishment on those who commit it, as the proper and responsible authors of it? These and other like questions may be quickly answered by superficial minds. But men who think profoundly, will find a depth not to be explored; and while they see clearly the effects of divine operation, will confess themselves ignorant of the mode of it.

We come now to the third point, on which reason fails of attaining to a complete knowledge, viz. the *nature and connections* of the divine works. We may be acquainted with their nature, so far as is necessary to the end of our being, while our knowledge is still very imperfect. The most enlightened philosopher has never dis-

covered all the properties of a single body, much less of a single mind. With respect to the whole extent of the works of God, our ignorance is extreme. For example, what do we know of the peculiar nature of angels?—of their mode of existing and acting, acquiring knowledge, and conversing with one another, and with God? And what do we know of the numberless worlds which God has made, so many of which we see with the naked eye, or discover with the help of the telescope, in the evening sky? And what do we know of the beings that inhabit them? And we can have at present only an imperfect knowledge of the *relations* existing among the creatures of God. With the relations of mankind towards one another, we are indeed sufficiently acquainted. But of our relation to other intelligent beings, and of the peculiar manner in which they are affected by our feelings and conduct, and we by theirs, and in which our interests and theirs are connected, we have but a very obscure conception. Our relation to God can be known only in part. In some important respects it may be truly set forth by earthly relations, as the relation of children to a father, of subjects to a ruler, of servants to a master, of sheep to a shepherd, and of clay to a potter. But these earthly relations, when used to represent our relations to God, are to be understood in a metaphorical sense, and are chiefly intended to teach us the *duties* which on our part are involved in the relation, and the various blessings which it secures to those who obey. But of the connections existing among other orders of intelligent beings, we are almost entirely ignorant. All parts of the intelligent creation are doubtless connected together, so as to make one society, one complete system. But who can tell what the connection is, especially between beings of different orders; what knowledge they have of each other; what is the mode of their intercourse, and in what manner or degree they participate in each others weal or wo? Who can answer the question, whether different orders of beings, far distant from each other in place, and for the present totally unacquainted with each other, may not still be, in some way, connected together; whether this connection will not, in future time, be made known to them, and what effect such knowledge

will produce, and what influence their connection, at present unknown to them, has upon the administration of the omniscient God towards each of them? Verily, the knowledge of these things "is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it."

Here I close my first argument in support of the proposition, that the doctrines taught us by revelation must relate to subjects incomprehensible to man.

My second argument is from *the Bible itself*. What then does this sacred volume teach relative to the subject before us? Do the inspired writers attempt to make the subjects of which they treat, level to the human understanding? Do they undertake to put an end to mysteries? For satisfaction on this point let us repair to their writings.

The first passage which occurs, is in the history of the dedication of the Temple. Impressed with the surpassing greatness of God, Solomon exclaims—"Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee." In the book of Job we find some striking representations of the incomprehensibility of God, which are in perfect agreement with the general language of Scripture. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection." One great end of the address, which the Lord made to Job from the whirlwind, was, to teach him and his friends, that the divine perfections and works transcend the comprehension of man. The Psalms in like manner teach, that the greatness of God is unsearchable; that his knowledge is too wonderful for us—so high that we cannot attain unto it; that his understanding is infinite. Isaiah exclaims, "there is no searching of his understanding." The Apostle, who was taught in the third heavens, cries out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments! and his ways past finding out!" and he elsewhere declares, that God dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto; that no man hath seen or can see him; that his love passeth knowledge.

The instructions of the Bible are similar respecting the works of God. It teaches, that he doeth great things and unsearchable; that his judgments are a great deep, and his footsteps not

known; that only a little portion of him is heard; that his thoughts and ways are as high above ours, as the heavens are above the earth.

Thus you see, that men of the clearest views and the highest attainments in spiritual things—men inspired by the Holy Ghost, and divinely authorized to teach the doctrines of religion, make no pretensions to a capacity large enough to comprehend the perfections and works of God, or to give instruction which would render them comprehensible to others. But this is not all. They not only make no pretensions to this, but expressly disclaim it. They take special care to guard us against supposing, that the revelation which they communicated from God, was ever intended to put an end to mysteries, or that it could possibly have any other effect, than to increase them. Now if God himself, who deigns to teach mankind the truths of religion, still leaves those truths in many respects enveloped in clouds and darkness; and if he moreover makes it one fundamental doctrine, that the subjects of revelation are incomprehensible; what must be our conclusion? Is God unwilling to impart the knowledge, which would be advantageous to us, and which we are capable of receiving? Must not our conclusion rather be, that God has communicated all the knowledge which would be of practical utility, but that the subjects of religion, from their very nature, exceed the capacity of finite minds; and that they cannot be made fully comprehensible to us, unless we can first be freed from all the appointed limitations of our knowledge, and can be endued with an intellectual faculty, equal to that of the uncreated, infinite mind.

While the inspired writers declare, that the things of religion are incomprehensible, their manner in writing evidently corresponds with their declarations. When anything mysterious is brought into view, do they show surprise? Never. On the contrary, they appear to be familiar with the idea of mystery, and constantly to bear in mind, that the divine perfections and works surpass the highest intellect of creatures. This they always take for granted. Accordingly, they are so far from making any attempt to divest religion of its mysteries, that they are continu-

ally directing our attention to subjects which are profoundly mysterious — always leaving mysteries unexplained. They teach that there is a God — a Being existing without beginning or cause; that though a pure Spirit, he gives existence to matter; that he is present in all places; knows all events, past and future; that he sustains the world, and governs moral agents; that by his sovereign power he directs and controls rational beings, while they, without the least hinderance, exercise a free and justly accountable agency. But do they explain the mode of the divine operation in such cases? Do they tell us how these things can be? Not a word of this. They simply announce these great truths, and then leave them.

I must say, moreover, that the inspired writers continually bring to view new mysteries — mysteries superadded to those which are suggested to reason by the common operations of God. What they teach of the divine character in the work of redemption is, if possible, more incomprehensible, than anything known before. They declare that God is gracious, as well as just; that the Son of God was made flesh and dwelt among us; that he suffered for our sins, rose for our justification, and is our continual intercessor at the right hand of the Father; that the Holy Spirit is sent into the world to enlighten and sanctify sinners; that the invisible Saviour reigns in Zion; that he will keep his own people, and suffer none of them to perish; and that he exercises unlimited dominion over the creation. These are some of the new subjects unfolded in the gospel revelation. But do inspired writers give any explanation of these new and mysterious doctrines? Do they take away the unsearchableness of divine grace? Do they explain how the word, who was God, became flesh? or how, after the assumption of human nature, he could still be one person? or how the sufferings of an innocent and holy being could, with propriety, be substituted for the sufferings of the guilty? Do they teach what is the exact manner of his intercession in heaven, or of his invisible agency on earth? Do they explain how the Holy Spirit, unseen, unheard, and whose influence we know not, except from affections and actions which are properly our own, illumi-

nates and sanctifies the heart? Not a word of all this. Instead of any attempts to explain these subjects, or to make them level to our minds, they cry out, *Oh the depth! unsearchable! past finding out!* In the name of the Lord they proclaim the truth, point out its practical use, and require us to receive it with meekness and faith, and then they have done.

Reflect now upon the practical use of the principle which I have endeavored so particularly to illustrate. That the perfections and works of God so far transcend the utmost power of our understandings, is a truth rich in blessings, and is adapted to satisfy the boundless aspirings of our spiritual nature. A religion without mysteries could never gain the respect and reverence of intelligent beings. A God, possessed of no attributes beyond the reach of our limited faculties, could not be the object of our supreme veneration and confidence. We must have a religion which abounds in mysteries. A religion — if there could be such a religion — destitute of what is mysterious, would be the object of contempt. There is a principle inherent in the human mind, which leads us to crave that which is inconceivably great. We aspire after an object, whose sublimity exceeds the reach of our thoughts. After we have climbed to the highest accessible part of a mountain, we love to stand and gaze at those heights which are inaccessible. In like manner, we love to lose ourselves in the sublime and the profound of divine truth. We must have a God, in whom there is the unknown and the unknowable. Deep in our mental constitution, we have a curiosity which is boundless — a desire which cannot be repressed, to extend our knowledge beyond its present limits. And what could we do with this far-reaching desire, were it not for those doctrines of natural and revealed religion, which furnish the means of its gratification? There is no occasion to turn aside from the simplicity of divine truth, and to attempt, by factitious mysteries, to meet the cravings of a superstitious mind. The essential doctrines of religion, as made known by the works and word of God, have mysteries in great abundance — mysteries arising from the very nature of the subjects to which those doctrines relate. Those subjects, particularly those

brought to view in the gospel revelation, have a height and depth, a length and breadth, which will give endless employment, and endless pleasure to our ever active and immortal spirits. We may continually apply ourselves to the most earnest contemplation of these subjects, and may increase our knowledge for ages of ages without end, while this perpetual increase will show, more and more clearly, the imperfection of our knowledge, and will continually disclose to our improved intellect what is more and more unsearchable. O what a blessed eternity it will be to angels and saints, to be forever advancing in the knowledge and enjoyment of those divine and glorious objects, which will be forever incomprehensible!

In pursuing this discussion further, I might make use of the argument from analogy. Butler, in his excellent work on the Analogy of Religion to the constitution and course of nature, makes use of analogy chiefly, not as direct evidence of the truths of religion, but as a means of answering objections. In this view the argument is often of great value. For when objections are made against the truths of religion, which may be made with equal strength against what we know to be true in the course of nature; such objections can have no weight.

Now one of the standing allegations of unbelievers against Christianity is, that it is exposed to unanswerable objections, and that its doctrines are mysterious and incomprehensible, and consequently of no use. But the same unbelievers admit principles in natural science, which are equally mysterious and incomprehensible, and exposed to difficulties and objections which we are equally unable to solve. As to this allegation, the remark of Origen is sufficient to satisfy Christians; namely — "He who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as are found in the constitution of nature."

There are various doctrines in philosophy, which are clearly demonstrated, and which all men of intelligence believe, which are in some respects, mysterious and incomprehensible, and are attended with insolvable difficulties. Now, if this is the case with

natural science, which relates to objects which are visible — objects, many of which are very minute, and all of them finite; must it not be true of *revelation*, which relates to objects which are invisible — objects inconceivably sublime, and the chief of them possessed of attributes which are infinite? Is it not then strange, that men can be found, who profess to be friends to deep investigation, and who are no skeptics in philosophy, but fully believe all its principles, however mysterious and incomprehensible, who yet start at what is mysterious and incomprehensible in religion — as though mysteries were to be less expected in invisible things, than in visible — in the uncreated and infinite, than in the created and finite!

LECTURE III.

ARE ANY DOCTRINES OF REVELATION CONTRARY TO REASON?

THE incomprehensibleness of the subjects of religion, to which I called your attention in the previous Lecture, is often treated as a matter of mere speculation. All thinking men must occasionally bring it into view, and must admit that the doctrines of revelation do, in many respects, exceed the limits of the human understanding. But as soon as they come to the consideration of any particular doctrines, and meet with difficulties and mysteries, they generally lose sight of the principle which they had admitted, and either go about to frame some hypothesis, which will afford an explanation of the subject, or they suffer every difficulty and mystery to weaken if not to destroy their faith. The belief of the incomprehensibleness of the subjects of revelation, in order to be of any special use, must become an active principle. It must be wrought into our habit of thinking — must occur to the mind continually, whenever there is occasion for it; and produce such an effect upon our thoughts and feelings, that no difficulties, however great, shall diminish our confidence in any doctrine established by the authority of God.

There is a question, nearly allied to the subject already considered, which may be properly introduced in this place. And as I shall wish not to have occasion to encounter it again and again, I shall give you, in one unbroken view, the substance of what I have to offer.

The subjects of revelation, we have seen, are *above* the comprehension of reason. But are any of its doctrines *contrary* to reason? This is the question. The answer must depend chiefly, if

not entirely, upon the sense in which the word *reason* is used. Hitherto I have used it as denoting the whole intellectual capacity of the mind — the whole strength of the understanding, improved to the highest degree possible. But the word is used in different senses. And it is often used in a very indeterminate, vague sense. It becomes necessary then to attend to the different meanings which the word is made to bear, so that we may, in each case, adjust the answer to the real import of the question.

Are any doctrines of revelation, then, contrary to reason? If by reason is meant, *right* reason — the reason or understanding of one who judges impartially on the doctrines of Scripture; then the answer is negative. It is hardly necessary to say, that the doctrines of revelation are not contrary to the infinite understanding of God. All religious truths must harmonize with the divine intelligence, which is the highest reason in the universe. And it is equally clear, that they must be agreeable to the reason of created beings, so far as their reason acts in harmony with the understanding of God. The reason of man, when sufficiently enlightened, and under the guidance of holy affection, does in its judgments agree with the mind of God; of course, it receives those doctrines which are an expression of his mind. And it yields a ready consent to those doctrines, even when it sees no direct evidence of their truth. There are many cases in which this *direct* evidence, as I have called it, is wanting. We can perceive no sufficient grounds of belief in the doctrines themselves. We carefully look at them, but we do not discover any such evidence of their truth as would warrant our belief, except the mere declaration of God. In all such cases, right reason gives its assent to the doctrines of Scripture *indirectly*. It holds, first, that *God cannot lie*. It then holds the certain inference, that all the doctrines which he reveals must be true. Of course those doctrines which are most mysterious, and which at first view appear most repugnant to reason, gain the full assent of reason. In this way, every doctrine of the Bible appears perfectly reasonable. For surely reason finds nothing inconsistent in the idea, that God is true. Now the God of truth announces a doctrine of religion, or a future event. That

doctrine, or event, before it is divinely announced, may appear inconsistent with reason. Declare it in your own name, and by your own authority, and reason may refuse its assent. And it may do this very properly. To believe it on human authority, might be very unreasonable. But the moment God declares it, it becomes perfectly reasonable to believe it. Reason would discard one of its first principles, if it should not believe it. Nor is this representing reason as capricious, rejecting a proposition one minute, and receiving it the next, without any proper grounds. Rejecting the proposition in the first case supposed, may be very suitable, because it is declared only by fallible man, and it has not, in itself, any clear evidence of its truth. But when God declares it, the case is different. The proposition is the same, but not the evidence of it. In the first case, it has no evidence, but the unauthorized assertion of an ignorant, fallible man; which, viewed in the most favorable light, may be nothing better than conjecture, and may afford no proper ground of belief. In the other case, the proposition has the most satisfactory evidence — it rests on *the word of God.* This is the highest evidence, and therefore renders the belief perfectly agreeable to right reason. In such instances, reason is so far from being capricious, that it acts in the only reasonable and consistent manner; that is according to evidence.

This view of the subject might be illustrated by the instance of Noah, who believed that the world would be destroyed by a universal deluge — which it would have been very unreasonable to believe, had it not been for the declaration of God; by the instance of Abraham also, who, on the ground of the divine word, confidently believed things which, aside from that word, would have been incredible; and by the instance of every one who, merely from his confidence in God, cordially believes those doctrines of revelation, which are entirely beyond the discovery and the comprehension of reason.

Do you ask whether the word of God could make a real falsehood or absurdity credible? My reply is, that it would be the greatest of all absurdities and falsehoods to suppose, that such a Being as God would ever give his word for such a purpose. He

does indeed declare some things which may have to us, at first view, an *appearance* of inconsistency and falsehood. But it must be an appearance merely, and not a reality. For we know, and must always remember, that *God cannot lie.*

Thus far the word reason has been used in its highest, best sense — to signify, first, the infinite understanding of God, and then the reason of those who have confidence in God, and readily assent to all the doctrines revealed in his word. This is *right* reason. The doctrines of the Bible, instead of being contrary to reason thus understood, gain its full assent. To say that reason, taken in this sense, regards any of the doctrines of revelation as false or absurd, would be to say, that reason discards one of its own highest and most obvious principles.

But here comes up a difficulty. Hume asserts, that the Scripture doctrine of miracles is *contrary to reason;* and Priestley and Belsham assert the same as to the doctrines of the Trinity, atonement, and election. They are doubtless sincere in their assertions. When they say, that these doctrines are unreasonable, we must believe that they speak according to their own real convictions. Now what shall we do with cases of this kind? These three men, who regard important doctrines of Scripture as inconsistent with reason, represent a large class of men, both learned and unlearned, to whom the doctrines of revelation appear totally contrary to reason, and exceedingly absurd. The common and just position is, that the doctrines of Scripture are not contrary to reason. But the men referred to say, they *are* contrary to reason. Shall we charge them with saying this hastily, and without consideration? But they say this after long and earnest inquiry. Shall we charge them with being deficient in intellectual powers? But they are known to be distinguished for these, and also for their acquisitions in various branches of knowledge. Shall we charge them with asserting what they do not believe? This would be uncandid and unjust; for there is satisfactory evidence of their sincerity. How then can we reconcile these facts with the common and important principle, that no doctrines of revelation are contrary to reason? The only satisfactory solution of the diffi-

culty appears to be this. When Hume, Priestley and Belsham say, that the doctrines referred to are contrary to reason, they speak of *their own* reason, as it exists in themselves, and in others like them. For surely Hume would not say that the Scripture doctrine of miracles is contrary to the reason of Campbell; and Priestley and Belsham would not say, that the doctrines of the Trinity, atonement and election are contrary to the reason of Calvin, Boyle, and Wilberforce. For these evangelical writers must surely know what their own reason is, and how it operates, and what is consistent with it, and what is contrary to it. The fact then, freed from all ambiguity, is, that particular doctrines are contrary to reason, *as it exists in some men*, and agreeable to reason, *as it exists in others*. And this brings us to a point which is exceedingly obvious, to wit, that reason is formed to a different habit and exists in a different state, in some men, from what it does in others. In some, it is enlightened from above, and sanctified; and so its judgments are in conformity with the mind of God, which utters itself in the teachings of revelation. In others, reason is blinded and perverted by sin, and, acting as it does under the influence of corrupt passions, its judgments are contrary to the doctrines of Scripture. And if blinded, misguided reason is in its judgments contrary to the doctrines of Scripture, those doctrines are contrary to misguided reason. The contrariety is mutual. Thus all appears evident. The common position is sustained, that no doctrines of revelation are contrary to reason — that is reason *as it should be* — *right* reason — reason exercised in revering the character of God, in cordially submitting to his authority, and in receiving as certain truth, whatever he declares. But it does not follow, that the doctrines of Scripture are not contrary to *corrupt* reason. It would rather seem to be a matter of course, that those doctrines which agree with right reason, will disagree with perverted reason.

Some speak of reason as an *abstract* principle, and as always one and the same, admitting of no change; and hold that what agrees with it in one instance, must agree with it in all instances. But is it so? When or where did reason ever exist, or how can

it exist, separately from the minds of rational beings? And is it not influenced — are not its judgments, affected by the governing disposition or state of those in whom it resides? The intellectual faculty may be of the same general nature in all minds. But it exerts different degrees of strength and it forms different habits of reasoning and judging, in minds of one character, from what it does in minds of another character. And these different habits of reasoning and judging, constitute what we may call the character of reason. And who can doubt, that the *faculty* of reason may have different characters, as well as the persons in whom it resides?

The question under consideration may very properly be stated in another form: namely, whether any of the doctrines of Scripture are contrary to the views and judgments of *rational beings*. The question in this form must receive different answers. None of the doctrines of revelation are contrary to the views and judgments of enlightened and consistent Christians. But some of these doctrines are contrary to the views and judgments of those, who are enslaved by their evil passions, and are given over to pervert the truth, and to believe a lie.

Does any one say, that the faculty of reason is incapable of existing in states and forming judgments so different? I acknowledge this to be the case in regard to some subjects; for example, the principles and demonstrations of geometry. Here, those who will allow themselves to think, cannot but think alike. But is it so in regard to those subjects, on which our views and judgments are influenced by our dispositions and habits of mind? What does Scripture teach? And what do experience and observation teach? They teach, that mankind are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts; that the world by wisdom knows not God; that to some the doctrines of the cross are foolishness; that the reason of unsanctified men is darkened and misguided. Now the contrariety of gospel doctrines to darkened and misguided reason, results necessarily from their truth. Doctrines which are infallibly true, must be contrary to that which is false. No one doubts that

the truths of revelation may be contrary to the irregular and depraved dispositions of man. And why may they not be equally contrary to those actings of his reason, which are influenced by his depraved dispositions?

In cases where men's judgments are false, it is sometimes said that they do not *use* their reason. And if by their not using their reason, is meant that they do not use it *right;* this is what I am contending for. But if by their not using their reason be meant, that they do not in any way exercise their rational powers; this cannot be true. For in the cases referred to, the rational powers of men are often exercised diligently and intensely in pursuit of their favorite objects.

It might easily be shown, that the faculty of reason, however perverted and degraded, can never be destroyed; and that it will finally see the clear light of truth, and judge correctly on moral subjects. But it is certain that sin tends for the present to obscure the light of reason, and to fill the mind with extravagant and pernicious errors.

But the question, whether any doctrines of revelation are contrary to reason, is sometimes put in a sense which is altogether indefinite and vague. One man tells us that, in the inquiry before us, he means to speak of reason *in general* — reason *in the abstract.* But we do not certainly know what he would signify by general or abstract reason. If he means to ask, whether any doctrines of revelation are contrary to the infinite reason of God; we answer, no. If he means to ask, whether they are contrary to the reason of angels; we still answer, no. If his question is, whether any doctrines of revelation are contrary to the reason of mankind; then we hesitate, because the reason of some men differs essentially in its judgments from the reason of others. The doctrines of revelation may be contrary to reason, as it developed itself in Hume, Priestly and Belsham. But they are not by any means contrary to reason, as it appeared in Paul, Peter and John; or as it appeared in Calvin, Charnock and Edwards. If the inquirer means to ask, whether any doctrines of revelation can be supposed to be contrary to reason, as it exists and acts in himself;

I should answer, that it depends altogether upon the state of his reason, or his habit of thinking. Should he ask, whether any doctrines of revelation are contrary to the reason of the majority of mankind; the answer would depend upon the character of the majority. In one age, the majority may reason so incorrectly, as to think the doctrines of revelation absurd. But in another age, the majority may reason correctly, and think those doctrines perfectly reasonable.

The questions which arise on this subject, and the seeming difficulties attending it, can, I think, be satisfactorily solved in no way, but by making the distinction above suggested, between *right* reason, and *corrupt* reason; which is only a distinction between reason under a right direction, and reason as it is perverted and blinded by sin. Reason in the last sense, is no more right reason, than a sinner is sinless. To contend that reason in all cases must be right, would be just as consistent, as to contend that *affection* in all cases must be right. It is very evident, that whether the opinions of men are right or wrong, they cannot cease to use their reason, that is, their rational faculty, any more than they can cease to use their *will*, in their right or wrong volitions. Neither truth nor error, neither belief nor unbelief, can be predicated of one, in whom the rational powers are at rest, any more than walking and running can be predicated of one, whose bodily organs are motionless. "The dispute," says one, "betwixt Christians and unbelievers concerning reason, is not, whether men are to *use* their own reason, any more than whether men are to see with their own eyes; but the question is, whether every man's reason must needs guide him by its *own light*, and must cease to guide him, as soon as it guides him by a light borrowed from revelation. This is the true state of the question; not whether reason is in any sense to be our guide, but how it may be made a *safe* guide?" "Christians pretend to no guide, which excludes the use of their reason; they pretend not to assert anything, but because it cannot be reasonably denied. We oppose unbelievers, not because they reason, but because they reason ill. We receive revelation, not to suppress the power of our reason, but to improve its light; not to

take away our right of judging for ourselves, but to secure us from false judgments; and whatever is required to be believed or practised by revelation, is only so far required as there is reason for it. We do not therefore differ from unbelievers in the constant use of our reason, but in the *manner* of using it."

LECTURE IV.

RIGHT APPLICATION OF REASON TO THE TEACHINGS OF REVELATION.

THE application of reason to the doctrines of Christianity is a subject so difficult to be well understood, and erroneous opinions concerning it have been so prevalent, and in some instances, have been asserted with such confidence and plausibility, that I have thought it necessary to give "line upon line, precept upon precept." I have wished to awaken attention to the principles which should regulate our inquiries; and not only to awaken attention to them, but to dwell upon them till they become familiar. I would gladly aid you, as far as possible, in your endeavors to correct all those mental habits, which would hinder you from rightly apprehending and believing the truths of religion, or would diminish their salutary influence. Wishing to afford all the assistance in my power in your pursuit of theological science, I shall now lay distinctly before you, a few of *the practical principles and rules to be observed in the application of reason to the peculiar and incomprehensible subjects of revelation.*

First. Remember that *human reason is progressive.* The infant Newton had merely a capacity to receive instruction. A considerable time was necessary for him to become acquainted with the objects of sense first presented to his view, and with the simple language of the nursery. That great philosopher was once ignorant of the letters which composed his own name, and the name of his favorite science. That great mathematician had to learn, that

two and two make four. In childhood as in youth his knowledge gradually increased. When he became a man, he put away childish things. The faculties of his mind rose to uncommon strength. He began to look at creation with the eye of a philosopher. By examining the various phenomena of the natural world, and by pursuing the science of demonstration, he succeeded in clearing away the rubbish of ancient philosophy, and formed a system which has enlightened and astonished the world. Human reason, in all its improvements, is slowly progressive. From the ignorance of infancy, it rises to one grade of knowledge above another; and who is able to mark its highest limit? The Apostle teaches us, that as the knowledge of a man exceeds that of a child, so the knowledge of believers in the future state will exceed the highest improvements which they make in the present life.

The fact thus briefly illustrated, that human reason is of a progressive nature, is suited to some important practical uses.

The first respects *the arrangement of subjects, and the order of our studies in theology.* I will explain myself as clearly as possible. Newton when a child, was, in strength of intellect, very different from Newton when a man. Theorems and demonstrations, which were plain and easy to him at the age of forty, were totally beyond his grasp at twelve, or even twenty. The question is, how shall the young philosopher grow in strength of understanding, so as to be master of those theorems, which are now too hard for him? Shall he make those theorems the next subject of study, and endeavor, by one incessant, painful effort, to stretch his mind to a comprehension of them? This would be a mere waste of time. For he may not yet understand the terms, in which the theorems are set forth. Or if he does, he may not understand the previous principles, which are involved in the theorems, and on which their truth depends. His proper business is, to become familiarly acquainted with all those previous principles, and to accustom himself to apply them in the demonstration of truths within his reach — rising gradually to those of a higher and higher order. This course will bring him at length so near to the sublimest theorems, that he will have only to advance a single step further, in order

to reach them. Once this last step was impossible; now it is easy.

The principle which I would impress upon you, may be illustrated by the common method of acquiring the knowledge of geometry. A youth just entering on the study of Euclid's Elements, would be totally unable either to demonstrate the forty-seventh proposition of the first book, or to understand the demonstration when stated by another. It would be absurd for him to attempt it. He must first understand the previous principles, and the proper method of applying them. After this the proposition becomes perfectly intelligible, and the proof of it plain and certain. In this respect there is an obvious analogy between mathematics and theology. Doubtless we have lost much labor by grasping at truths, which have been at the time too high for us; when our proper business has been, to get as perfect a knowledge as possible of plainer truths, and of all the principles on which those higher truths depend, and from which they result. In order to our best improvement in any science, it is important, that we ascertain at every stage of our progress, what is the next subject of inquiry, and the next step to be taken. By reaching forward too far, or attempting to go too fast, we may lose much, not only in the clearness, but also in the extent of our knowledge. Our studies ought, as far as possible, to be arranged in such order, that the present subject of inquiry may stand next to the last, and every successive acquisition of knowledge be one step in advance of the preceding. And this is only saying, that in every stage of our progress, the subject of inquiry should be suited to our present capacity, or to the improvement already made.

The progressive nature of reason is adapted to another important use, namely, that *we ought not in any case to conclude, that we shall always be incapable of obtaining clear and satisfactory views of a subject, because we are now incapable.* Newton, at the age of twelve or fifteen, attempts to demonstrate some of the sublime principles of philosophy, but finds they are beyond his reach. Shall he conclude that they will be so forever? To conclusions of this nature we are constantly liable, in regard to the vast and incom-

prehensible subjects of theology. We forget that we are in the childhood of our being, just setting out in the pursuit of knowledge. By some doctrine of revelation, or of natural theology, you find yourselves perplexed and confounded. Intense wearisome study affords no satisfaction. You are now tempted to conclude, that the doctrine cannot be true; or if you avoid this error, you are in danger of falling into another, namely, that the doctrine can never be satisfactorily understood. But how does this follow? Do you not understand some things now, which once appeared unintelligible? And have you already attained to the highest point of knowledge, which is attainable? Have you arrived at the end of your probationary state? Is no more time afforded you for searching after heavenly wisdom? Who can tell, what a few more years, with an increasing knowledge of facts, a sounder judgment, a better method of reasoning, a better government of the passions, and more divine teaching, may do for you? The difficulties which now perplex you, may vanish. Seeming inconsistencies may disappear, and light be cast on subjects, now enveloped in obscurity. But, for the highest knowledge of which you are capable, you must look to the heavenly state. Think not that the obscurity which is now mingled with your views of divine truth, is always to remain. Admit not the gloomy, discouraging thought, that after the low attainments you make in the present world, you are to stop forever. If we are what we profess to be, we shall not always see through a glass darkly. Yet a little while, and we shall be where there is no night; where we shall see as we are seen, and know even as we are known. While therefore we are humble in view of our present ignorance, and make the best use of our present advantages, let us patiently look for higher knowledge from the progressive improvement of our minds, and the clearer light of eternity.

Secondly. Having now considered the progressive nature of human reason, and some of the uses to be derived from that principle, I proceed to another point in the application of reason to theology, which has been hinted at in a previous Lecture, but which deserves to be stated more distinctly. It is this; that *we may affirm intelligible and momentous truths, and may have a cor-*

rect and salutary belief of them, although they relate to incomprehensible subjects. We may *partially* understand a subject, which we cannot understand *perfectly*. We may lay down intelligible propositions and have an operative faith on a subject, considered in one point of view, while in another point of view, it is not an object either of our knowledge, or of our faith. Our inability to comprehend the infinite God certainly does not imply, that we can have no knowledge of him. It is clear from the Scriptures, that the prophets and apostles had clear views of the divine character, in some respects, though, in other respects, they were totally confounded. "The incomprehensibleness of God," says Saurin, "is one of those doctrines, which we ought to defend with the greatest zeal, because it has a mighty influence in morality and religion; but it would become a subversion of both, were it to be carried beyond its just bounds. We have seldom met with a proposition more extravagant, than that of a certain bishop, namely; that before we affirm anything of a subject, we must perfectly understand it. From hence he concluded, that we can affirm nothing of any subject, because we do not perfectly understand any. And from hence it naturally follows, that of the supreme Being we have the least pretence to affirm anything, because we have a less perfect knowledge of him, than of any other subject. What absurd reasoning! It shall suffice to observe, in general, that ignorance of one part of a subject does not hinder the knowing of other parts of it; nor ought it to hinder our affirmation of what we do know. I do not perfectly understand the nature of light; however, I do know that it differs from darkness, and that it is the medium by which objects become visible."

To these remarks of Saurin I add, that unless we may frame intelligible propositions on incomprehensible subjects, we must exclude from our discourse not only subjects of rare sublimity and extent, but those which are most familiar, and with which we have a daily concern. But who ever thinks of this? Whatever reserve skeptical philosophers may judge proper, on a few mysterious subjects in religion; yet who of them speaks with less freedom or less confidence on the common course of events, or the daily incidents of life, because they are, in some respects, inexplicable?

I must go still further and say, that we may discourse as intelligibly, and with as much certainty and profit, on subjects which are, in some respects, incomprehensible, as we could do if they came perfectly within the sphere of our knowledge. In order to render our affirmations on any subject capable of being certainly understood, and applied to useful purposes, it is only necessary, that our knowledge of the subject extend as far as our affirmations. So far as the clearness and utility of our discourse are concerned, more knowledge than this is not required. The propositions of Newton in his Optics, respecting the different refrangibility and colors of the rays of light, are as intelligible, and as worthy of belief, as though we perfectly understood the nature of light. The phrases, I am hungry, I am thirsty, I love, I hate, are used as properly by a child, as by a metaphysician; and as properly by both, as they could be, if the nature of our appetites and affections were perfectly comprehended. In order that our discourse on the subjects of common life may be intelligible and useful, nothing is necessary but that we simply express what is known, never attempting to go a hair-breadth further. The propositions which inductive philosophy has formed respecting the principle of gravitation, are easy to be understood, and obviously true, so far as they agree with the well known phenomena of material bodies. But when philosophy, ambitious of higher achievements, attempts to account for these phenomena, these original facts, by hypotheses respecting the unknown and unknowable nature and operations of matter, all becomes dark and doubtful. It is this tendency of human reason to transgress its proper bounds — it is this tendency of curiosity to busy itself about things with which it can never be acquainted, and with which we have no concern, and which in many cases have no existence — it is this, and not our limited capacity, which introduces uncertainty and perplexity into moral and theological science. By trying to see things which are invisible, we overstrain and injure our sight, and so are bewildered respecting those things, which are easily seen.

The principles which I have stated, are applicable to all the sciences, but especially and pre-eminently to theology. The

author before quoted, makes the application in the following manner: "The exercise of my reasoning powers produceth in me some incontestable notions of God, and from these notions immediately follow some certain results, which become the immovable basis of my faith in his word, of my submission to his will, and of my confidence in his promises. These notions and these consequences compose the body of natural religion. There is a self-existent Being. All creatures are derived from him, and he is the only source of all their perfections. That Being, who is the source of the perfections of all other beings, is wiser and more powerful than the wisest and most powerful creatures, who derive only a limited wisdom and power from him. From these incontestable notions which reason gives us of God, follow such consequences as these. If all creatures derive their being and preservation from him, and if I owe to him all I am and all I have, he is the only proper object of my supreme desires and hopes; and I am necessarily engaged to be grateful for his favors, and submissive to his will. If creature perfections are only emanations from him, the source of all perfections, I ought to have nobler sentiments of his perfections than of the perfections of creatures, how elevated soever the latter may be. I ought to fear and trust him more than I ought to fear and trust the mightiest and wisest of men; because the power of the mightiest and the prudence of the wisest, is only an emanation of his — and so of the rest. Let it be granted, that God is, in many respects, quite incomprehensible — that we can attain to only a small degree of knowledge of this infinite object. Yet, it will not follow, that the notions which reason gives us of him, are less just, or that the consequences which follow from these notions are less sure; or that all the objections which libertines pretend to derive from the incomprehensibility of God against natural religion, do not evaporate and disappear."

"If reason affords us some proper notions of God, and if some necessary consequences follow; much more may we derive some proper notions of God, and some sure consequences, from revelation. It is a very sophistical way of reasoning, to allege the darkness of revelation upon this subject, in order to obscure the

light which it does actually afford us. The incomprehensibleness of God does not imply, that we can know nothing of his character — that we cannot discover in what cases he will approve our conduct, and in what cases he will condemn it. It only implies, that finite minds cannot form complete ideas of God — that they cannot know the whole sphere of his attributes, or foresee all the effects they can produce."

Now, if reason and revelation give us some clear and incontestable ideas of the incomprehensible God; we may surely express those ideas in intelligible propositions, and use such propositions for important practical purposes.

Robert Boyle, in various parts of his writings, takes pains to show, that we may properly meditate and discourse upon incomprehensible subjects. The result of his remarks is, that we may speak of things, which we acknowledge to be, on some account or other, above our reason; that the ideas we have, though imperfect, may be intelligible, and of great utility — though what they relate to may, in other respects, transcend our understanding.

I shall close my remarks on this topic by citing a passage from Buffier's First Truths. He says, "The nature of the human mind is, to know the existence of certain things, without being acquainted with all their properties; and to renounce the knowledge of their existence, because we are incapable of fully knowing their properties, would be the same thing, as if a man should refuse to be convinced that he remembers and thinks, because he cannot explain to his satisfaction, in what *manner* he remembers and thinks. The manner eludes our researches. Let us give it up. We suffer ourselves to be perplexed with this, because we have no idea of it. And yet this very circumstance should free our minds from all perplexity; for any particular matter, of which we have no idea, is, and ought to be, with respect to our reason and arguments, as though it did not exist. A deficiency of knowledge, or a thing unknown, never makes any alteration in real knowledge, or a thing known. We know not in what manner the First Being exists; we nevertheless know that he does exist. We do not comprehend the measure of his eternity; we however conceive its reality and neces-

sity. We do not conceive in what manner he produced all things; but we very well conceive, that he must have produced them. In fine, we have not an idea of all that the supreme Author of the universe is in himself; but we have a very clear idea, that he must certainly possess, in a superlative degree, all the qualities, which deserve our admiration, esteem and love." — To express these plain, useful ideas in a suitable manner to one another, is a principal design of language. — I now come to my

Third rule. Admit no doctrine without proof sufficient in its kind, and suited to the nature of the subject. Even when the subjects of inquiry are very abstruse, and endued with peculiar attributes, so that we must judge of them by different rules, from what we make use of in judging of things more familiar; still we ought never to give our assent to anything as truth, without sufficient reason. And although whatever is above reason, may have attributes which are, in some respects, unsearchable; yet we are not to believe that such attributes actually belong to it, without proof. If in any case our belief is not grounded on rational argument, it is unreasonable and puerile. If it is grounded on rational argument, let the argument be produced. For though the subject to which the proposition relates, is above human reason, still the argument, being framed by reason, ought to be intelligible. There is no need that I should here mention the difference, which I trust has already been made manifest, between our being fully able to comprehend the nature of a thing, and being able to give an intelligible reason for some proposition respecting it.

The rule I have laid down is, that no doctrine is to be admitted without proof *sufficient in its kind, and suited to the nature of the subject.* Mathematical truth must have mathematical evidence. Historical truth must have historical evidence; philosophical truth philosophical evidence; and moral truth, moral evidence. For example; if I assert that the Bible is divinely inspired, I must show that it has undeniable marks of divine inspiration. I must prove, by incontestable arguments, that it came from God. The rule applies also to the doctrines of the Bible. These doctrines relate principally to the character and purposes of God — to the great

plan of his operations in providence and redemption — to the character and duty of man, and to what will take place after death. Now what is the kind of proof that is sufficient to establish these doctrines? It cannot be mathematical proof; because the subjects are not of a mathematical nature. It cannot be of such a kind as belongs to the science of physics; because the peculiar doctrines of the Bible are not, like the doctrines of physical science, founded on phenomena, which are obvious to our senses. The proof cannot consist of the testimony of uninspired men; because the knowledge of uninspired men does not extend to these subjects. Nor can the proof consist in deductions from any moral truths, which are obvious to natural reason. The proof of the peculiar doctrines of the Bible must consist, in *the testimony of God himself.* On these subjects no being but God has adequate knowledge; and consequently no one else is able to give us certain information. If therefore we ever have any belief respecting the peculiar subjects laid before us in the Scriptures, it must of necessity be founded on the testimony of God. This is proof sufficient in its kind. We can have no other. The subject admits no other, and if other evidence could be had, this would still be the highest and most satisfactory. In things which come within our reach, we are satisfied with the evidence of our own reason and senses. But the evidence which the testimony of the infinite God affords, is of far higher authority. We always admit the testimony of men, in cases where they are considered as impartial and competent witnesses. But the testimony of God is far greater. Who can pretend that the ground of our faith in the peculiar doctrines of revelation, is less substantial or sure, than the ground of our belief in those things with which we are conversant in common life? Here, our belief is founded on the testimony of our senses. And what is the testimony of our senses, but the method by which God makes us acquainted with the sensible world around us? The Author of our nature speaks to us, in this case, through the medium of our bodily organs — a medium sufficiently certain for the common purposes of the present life. But it is not always infallible, and never was intended to be. Nor is there any necessity that it should be. In

the other case, our faith is founded on revelation. And what is revelation, but the method by which God makes us acquainted with things in the spiritual world, of which we could have no knowledge in any other way? This method of divine communication respects our eternal interests, and is therefore attended with superior certainty.

It is in reality the knowledge of *facts*, however communicated, which is of chief consequence to us, and which forms the basis of our reasoning. The manner in which that knowledge is obtained, is not material. In philosophy, we ground our reasoning and faith upon facts which are discovered to us by the senses. Revelation makes known a set of facts not discoverable in this way — facts relating to subjects entirely different from anything in the sensible world. These facts become the ground of theological reasoning and faith. And why do not our reasoning and faith in this case rest on as firm a foundation, as in philosophy? If there is any difference, it must certainly be in favor of facts made known by revelation — as that is a method more infallible than any other.

Is it said, that our faith in revelation, is required to be so implicit, as to supersede the use of reason? But how does it appear that our faith in revelation is more implicit than in other things? *Implicit* faith is that which rests upon the authority of another, or which has full confidence in the testimony of another. Thus children implicitly believe the declaration of a father, in cases where all other evidence is excluded. Their belief rests wholly upon their father's wisdom and veracity, and not upon anything within the compass of their own knowledge. Apply this to the confidence which you have in the testimony of the senses. You open your eyes upon the rainbow, and you behold the beauty of its form and colors. Again, in a May morning, you see blooming orchards, you smell the fragrance of the air, and hear the music of birds. In autumn you taste a variety of fruits. In all these cases, you have implicit confidence in the testimony of your senses. Without the least investigation or hesitancy, you admit the form and colors of the rainbow, the bloom

of the orchards, the odors of the air, and the melody of birds to be, just as your senses represent them to be. In other words, you have implicit confidence in your senses. You unreservedly trust in their testimony. Now how does it appear that your faith in revelation is more truly implicit, than in your senses? You trust implicitly in the word of God. You have full confidence in what he says. You believe things to be, just as he represents them to be; as you believe things in the other case to be, just as your senses represent them to be.

It is common for us to trust in the declarations of any one of our fellow creatures, when his veracity has been sufficiently proved. And this belief in the declarations of a man is as *really* implicit, as our faith is required to be in the declarations of God. But the degree or strength of this implicit faith, ought always to be proportioned to the evidence we have of veracity. If we have higher proof of the veracity of God, than of the veracity of man, it is certainly fit that we should have more implicit and entire confidence in his testimony, than in the testimony of man. And if we have higher and more absolute proof of the truth of God, than we have of the truth of our *senses*, why is it not suitable, that we should believe his declaration more implicitly and confidently, than we believe our senses?

We are brought to the conclusion, that the implicitness of the faith, which we are in any case required to have in divine revelation, does by no means supersede the use of reason; inasmuch as such faith is grounded in the deliberate and full conviction of reason, that divine revelation is and must be infallibly true.

It is then very clear, that no solid objection can be urged against the evidence on which we are to rely, in support of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. It is the only kind of evidence which is adapted to the subjects of revelation. Faith, resting on this evidence, rests on the firmest foundation. Nor is such faith more truly implicit in its nature, than faith founded on any other kind of evidence; nor more implicit in *degree*, any further than the evidence of the veracity of God is greater, than the evidence we have of the veracity of any other witness.

LECTURE V.

A DOCTRINE PROVED BY SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE, IS NOT TO BE REJECTED ON ANY ACCOUNT WHATEVER.

WHENEVER we apply ourselves seriously to the investigation of moral and theological subjects, we meet with various speculative difficulties. These difficulties, which we ought to remember arise necessarily from the nature of these subjects, in connection with our limited capacity, frequently occasion serious doubts as to the truth of what the Scriptures teach, and so deprive us of the benefits of a strong, unwavering faith. It is from an earnest desire to guard you against this pernicious influence of speculative difficulties, that I have been led to introduce these precautions, and to detain your thoughts upon them so long. Experience has taught me, that by seasonable attention to the principles, which should regulate our reasoning and our faith, we may effectually prevent the danger of forming a skeptical habit of mind; whereas no considerations can shield us from the pressure of speculative difficulties, when we have actually fallen into a habit of doubting. I come then to my

Fourth rule respecting the application of reason to the doctrines of religion, namely, *a doctrine proved by sufficient evidence, is not to be rejected on any account whatever.*

As an illustration of this and the last rule, I shall quote a few passages from a discourse of Dr. Chalmers. "It was," he says, "the property of Newton's mind, that it kept a tenacious hold of every position, which had proof to substantiate it; but it forms a property equally characteristic,—that he put a most determined exclusion on every position that was destitute of such proof. He would not admit the astronomical theories of those who went before

him, because they had no proof. He would not submit his judgment to the reigning systems of the day;—for though they had authority to recommend them, they had no proof. He wanted no other recommendation for any one article of science, than the recommendation of evidence; and with this recommendation, he opened to it the chamber of his mind, though authority scowled upon it, and fashion was ashamed of it. But on the other hand, should the article of science want the recommendation of evidence, he shut against it all the avenues of his understanding.—The strength of his philosophy lay as much in refusing admittance to that which wanted evidence, as in giving a place to that which possessed it."

The rule above laid down, is of extensive use. And if we would duly apprehend its importance, especially at the present day, we must fix our attention upon it with more than ordinary care, and must consider it in several of its particular applications.

A doctrine proved by sufficient evidence, is not to be rejected on any account whatever.

First. It is not to be rejected because we cannot understand the *mode* of it; that is, because we cannot answer the question, *how* the attribute belongs to the subject, or *how* the cause produces the effect.

Take the connection of soul and body. It is proved by sufficient evidence, that the soul and body are connected, and that they have an influence upon each other. The evidence is suited to the subject, and is the only evidence which the subject admits. It arises from our uniform experience of what passes within ourselves, and our uniform observation of what takes place in others. But we are, in many respects, totally unable to conceive *how* the soul and body are united, or *how* the one acts upon the other, or is acted upon by it. Shall we, on this account, deny their connection, and mutual influence? that is, shall we deny that which is sufficiently proved, and which we certainly know, because there is something else respecting it, which we cannot know? The many hypotheses which speculative men have invented, to explain the mode of the connection between soul and body, need not to be recited. I refer to

them, as a striking proof of the inattention of writers, both to the proper grounds of human belief, and to the necessary limits of human knowledge.

Take the faculty of memory. It is proved by sufficient evidence, that the mind recalls what is past. But all attempts to conceive the modus operandi, are in vain. The most plausible hypothesis for explaining the phenomena of memory is, that ideas make permanent impressions upon the substance of the brain, and that these impressions are made use of by the mind, in recalling the ideas to which they answer. But this hypothesis does nothing but involve us in greater darkness. For how is it conceivable, that the human brain, a thing of such narrow compass, can receive and retain so many distinct impressions; that it can retain the signatures of all the words in various languages — of the particular aspects of ten thousand faces — of the forms of ten thousand houses, trees and animals — of so many different countries — of so many schemes, arguments and imaginations; — that the brain can retain all these impressions and signatures in so exact an order, and without confusion, and that the mind is able, by means of these impressions on the substance of the brain, instantly to recall the words in various languages, the thousands of faces, houses, trees, animals, and places, which have been seen, and the numberless schemes, arguments and imaginations, which have passed through the mind, as occasion requires? This is one out of many instances, in which an attempt to explain the modus operandi, plunges us into greater perplexity. But are we, on this account, to deny the existence of a faculty, of which we have constant and undeniable evidence, or the unnumbered facts resulting from it, which we every day feel in ourselves, or witness in others?

Take now a doctrine of theology. The absolute prescience of God is proved by clear and sufficient evidence. But *how* does God certainly know things future? *How* does he foresee all the thoughts, purposes and affections, that will exist in the minds of men and angels, and all the motions and events that will take place in the universe, through everlasting ages? This we cannot explain. So far as *we* have foreknowledge, except what we derive

from the word of God, we obtain it by means of past experience; and, at best, it is not attended with absolute certainty. How God could from eternity see and know, at once, all things future, without the least uncertainty or mistake, and without any means whatever, we cannot tell. But who will deny the fact? I might also recall your attention to creation. The difficulty of conceiving *how* God could cause that to exist which had no existence before, has led some men to assert the eternity of matter, and the impossibility of a proper creation; and others, to believe the absurdities of pantheism; — a mortifying instance of the extravagance of men in denying an important fact, which is proved by sufficient evidence, because they cannot explain the manner of it!

The incarnation of Christ is a doctrine of the gospel. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us." "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Thus the incarnation of the Son of God is a fact made known by the testimony of inspired writers. This is sufficient proof; indeed it is the only proof of which the subject is capable. Now what have we to do with any of these questions, with which speculative men have perplexed themselves and others, respecting the *mode* of this fact? *How* could a divine Being be made flesh, or unite himself to human nature? In what way could the union take place, so as to constitute only one person? *How* is the divine nature affected by its connection with the human, and the human by its connection with the divine? *How* could the child Jesus retain all the properties of a child, and the man Jesus all the properties of a man, notwithstanding his personal union with the Divinity? If these two natures were united in the person of the Saviour, *how* could the Saviour suffer, without implying that Deity suffered? Or if Deity did not suffer, *how* could the sufferings of Christ be regarded, as anything more than the sufferings of a mere man? These and other like questions may be pressed upon us by the ingenuity of unbelief, and may all be unanswerable. What then? Things unknown can make no alteration in what is known. Our inability to answer these questions has no influence upon the proof which the Bible affords, of the union of the divine and hu-

man natures in the person of Christ. This proof is just as satisfactory as it would be, if the mode of his becoming incarnate were perfectly understood. The proof is of the highest kind, and perfectly suited to the nature of the subject. Notwithstanding our ignorance of the particular and exact manner of the incarnation, this proof of the fact ought to produce as firm a faith in us, as that which results from mathematical demonstration.

The doctrine of the Trinity is another example. The Scriptures teach us, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who are in a certain respect distinct, and may be properly spoken of as three, are yet one God. But how can three be one? What is the exact metaphysical distinction between three divine persons, and three divine Beings, or three Gods? How can the mode of the divine existence and the divine agency be such, that the same works are, in many passages of Scripture, ascribed to the Father and the Son, and be so ascribed to them, as to imply the same divine honors? Questions like these have been multiplied; but who has been able to give a satisfactory answer? The apostles never attempted to answer them. And why should we attempt that, which those inspired teachers never considered to be within their province? If we are as philosophical here, as we are in physical science, we shall unhesitatingly receive the doctrine of the Trinity upon its own proper and sufficient evidence, *the word of God*, and shall receive it in the very form which the word of God gives to it, just as we receive the doctrines of gravitation and magnetism upon their proper evidence, the testimony of our senses, and in the very form in which our senses represent them, never concerning ourselves with the modus operandi, and never undertaking to solve the speculative difficulties in which all such subjects are involved.

The doctrine of the divine agency affords other instances to the same purpose. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." But how imperfect is our knowledge of divine agency in this concern! How the minds of inspired men were affected; how religious truth could be communicated to them immediately from God, so as not to supersede the operation of their own reason, memory

and imagination, and yet in such a way, that they could distinguish with certainty, between the mere operation of those faculties and the infallible teaching of the Spirit — all this is inscrutable. But such a circumstance ought not either to prevent or to weaken our belief of the real inspiration of those who wrote the Scriptures.

We are also taught that believers are born again of the Spirit of God, and that while they are working out their own salvation, God worketh in them both to will and to do. Of this doctrine there is abundant evidence, arising from the dependence of man as a creature, from his depravity as a sinner, and from the plain teachings of Scripture. This is a fundamental truth. Without it our hope of spiritual good would languish, and the gospel become a dead letter. But the mode of this divine influence is a mystery. *How* this invisible agent can exert his power in the mind, change its moral nature, and excite good affections, without interrupting or diminishing moral agency — yea, in such a way as merely to secure the right direction of that agency; *how* believers can constantly experience the operation of a power entirely distinct from their rational faculties, and yet never be conscious of anything but the regular operation of those faculties; *how* the love of God can be shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and yet that love be the proper and responsible act of the believer; *how* these things can be, we are not able to explain. But if we should deny the divine agency in renewing and sanctifying sinners, because we are unacquainted with the mode of it, we should act as absurdly, as a man who hears the sound of the wind that blows, but denies its existence, because he cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth.

I have brought forward so many examples, in order to make a distinct and permanent impression of the import of the rule, and the value of this particular application of it. It belongs to the very constitution of the mind of man, that he has a strong thirst for knowledge; and in his present disordered state, he has a pride, which renders him unwilling to own the narrowness of his capacity, and the imperfection of his intellectual attainments. When

compelled by his unsuccessful efforts to see, that he is and must be ignorant of particular parts of a subject; a certain frowardness of temper frequently inclines him to deny what he actually knows. The remarks I have made in the present Lecture, are designed to counteract this dangerous tendency of our nature. A careful observance of it will not cool the ardor of your zeal in the pursuit of knowledge; but it will guard you against the evils of unavoidable ignorance, and at the same time secure to you the advantages of that knowledge, which you are capable of attaining.

Again. A doctrine, well supported, is not to be rejected, because it may appear to involve an *impossibility*. It is evident that a thing may appear to us impossible, when it is not so in reality. We may imagine a thing to be impossible, because it varies from the course of events which have fallen under our observation; or because we suppose that the power of God is subject to the same limitations with human power; or merely because we are ignorant of the nature of the thing. Thus we might, at first view, think the resurrection of a dead man to life to be an impossible event, it being so different from anything we had ever known. Whereas, if it were common for dead men, after a certain period, to be restored to life and activity, we should think it no more impossible, than the birth of a child, or the springing of corn from seed buried in the ground. The resurrection of mankind of all ages and nations, whether buried in the earth or ocean, burned to ashes, or left to consume on the ground, may appear to some utterly impossible, because they have no suitable views of the divine power. We might think the union of a human body to a human soul impossible, and the union of human nature to the divine nature in the person of Christ still more impossible, from our ignorance of the nature of the union, and of the things united.

I do not assert, that we are unable, in every case, to determine that a thing is impossible. I mean only to caution you against relying on your first views, and forming hasty conclusions, as to the impossibility of anything which is declared in Scripture, or proved by reason. My object is to keep you from concluding, that any proposition involves an impossibility, before you have maturely

considered the subject, and obtained adequate knowledge of its nature and circumstances.

Again; we are not to reject a doctrine supported by sufficient evidence, because we cannot reconcile it with some obvious principle of reason, or some acknowledged truth of revelation. The inconsistency which strikes us, may be merely apparent. It is so with those phenomena of the loadstone, which seem to be contrary to the general law of gravitation. Magnetism and gravitation are distinct physical powers, and are regulated by distinct laws. And neither of these powers affords any argument against the other, though in particular cases one of them may prevent the visible effect of the other. This is the case, too, with the alleged inconsistency between the purpose and agency of God, and the freedom and accountability of man. The inconsistency, so often asserted, is at most merely apparent, and is no reason why we should deny either the one or the other. The forgiveness of sin may appear inconsistent with the veracity of God in the penalty of his law. But this apparent inconsistency is no sufficient reason for denying the doctrine of forgiveness, or of the divine veracity, as both of them are clearly taught in the Scriptures, and notwithstanding their seeming inconsistency, may be perfectly reconciled with each other, on the ground of Christ's atonement. It is an obvious truth, that Jesus was truly and properly man, which may appear inconsistent with his being truly and properly God. But as both are asserted in Scripture, the inconsistency must be merely apparent, and can be no reason why we should deny either the humanity or the divinity of Christ. The same is true as to the divine Trinity and Unity.

In a multitude of instances, there is no difficulty in accounting for an appearance of inconsistency, where there is none in reality. Such an appearance of inconsistency between different doctrines is, therefore, no reason why we should disbelieve either of them.

A doctrine of revelation may seem to be irreconcilable with some received principle of reason, or some acknowledged truth of revelation, because some of the terms employed are used in an

uncommon sense. A few examples will show how much depends on this circumstance. The doctrine of three persons in the one divine Being may seem incompatible with the divine unity, because the word *person* is here used in an uncommon technical sense — a sense appropriate to theology; and, I may add, because the word *unity* must here be understood in a sense equally uncommon and appropriate; as it is unquestionably true, that the unity of God differs as really from the unity of a man as the personality of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit differs from the personality of human beings. Christ is said to have paid the price of our redemption, and to have bought us with a price; and yet, we are justly liable to punishment, and our salvation is a free gift. These things may appear inconsistent, merely because the words *pay*, *price* and *redemption* are used in a sense suited to the nature of the subject which is a metaphorical sense.

It is a representation of Scripture that God blots out the sins of believers, and will not remember them. This may appear inconsistent with God's bringing into judgment all the actions of men, whether good or bad, because the peculiar, metaphorical manner in which the Scriptures speak of God's not remembering or blotting out our sins is not duly attended to. In like manner, sinners being required to repent and obey the gospel may appear inconsistent with their being without strength and dead, because the peculiar sense of these words is not well understood.

Let me say, further, that a doctrine of revelation may appear inconsistent with some received principle of reason, or some other doctrine of revelation because the one or the other is not understood with its proper limitations. A proposition, taken in its most universal sense, may not be true, nor consistent with some other doctrines commonly received. But as soon as you restrain the sense of the proposition to those things to which it properly relates, both its truth and its consistency with other doctrines, will become obvious. The following examples will show the importance of this point.

Paul, speaking of the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv, uses language which, understood in its most extensive sense, is irreconcilable with

what is said elsewhere respecting the state of the wicked after death. But the difficulty vanishes, when you limit the sense of the Apostle's expression to his proper subject, that is, the resurrection of the saints.

"By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life." This will appear inconsistent with many texts of Scripture, which declare that all unbelievers are under condemnation, unless the sense of the apostle's words, "the free gift came upon all men to justification of life," is restricted, as I think it should be, to believers, or the spiritual seed of Christ; or unless the free gift coming upon all to justification can be made to signify merely, that a provision was made for all, or that the free gift was offered to all.

Once more; the gospel requires faith in Christ as the indispensable condition of salvation; which seems irreconcilable with the salvation of little children, unless the requisition is limited to those who are capable of understanding and performing it. In like manner, faith is represented as necessary to baptism; which is inconsistent with infant baptism, unless you act here upon the same principle, and limit the necessity of faith to those who are capable of exercising it, and who are to be baptized on the ground of their own faith.

In these and many other cases, there is the same reason for understanding a proposition in such a restricted sense, as there is for understanding a writer, in any case, according to his manifest design. Propositions are always meant to relate to those things, which are the subjects of discourse. Though the proposition may be universal in form, the extent of its signification is meant to be limited to the proper subject. By attending to this reasonable limitation of the meaning of words, we shall be able to see the perfect consistency of many doctrines, which would otherwise appear contradictory.

Again. An appearance of contradiction may arise merely from our ignorance. A distinguished writer makes the inquiry: "If I see a contradiction and impossibility, may I not conclude that they are such in fact? Yes," he says, "if you *see* them. But in order

to see them, the object must be within the reach of your capacity. Thus, when the Socinians find a contradiction in what religion teaches of the mystery of the Trinity, they judge contrary to the rules of natural reason. For religion proposes this mystery to us, as being the infinite nature of God himself, which is above the utmost reach of our comprehension; and natural reason directs us not to judge of objects beyond our capacity."

Take these two propositions; that God is the Creator and Preserver of all things, and that all things were made and are sustained by Jesus Christ. These propositions may appear contradictory, simply because we know not the exact relation between the Father and the Son, and the peculiar mode of their agency. Numberless instances might be adduced of apparent irreconcilableness between propositions which are true, arising from our ignorance of the subjects referred to.

To conclude; we are not to reject a doctrine well supported, because it is encumbered with ever so many difficulties and objections, which we are unable to remove. Boyle shows, that clear, positive proof, suited to the nature of a subject, is all that is necessary to gain our full assent to a doctrine, and that our intellect need not always take notice of the difficulties which attend it. "Unanswerable objections," says Buffier, "may be proposed respecting points which cannot be seriously doubted. Objections in such cases only show the limits of the human mind, but do not in the least alter the truth of what is clearly proved. Objections may be brought forward, which seem to confound our arguments — which still make no impression on common sense, because they are illusions, the falsehood of which may be discovered by the unerring light of revelation, though it cannot be always demonstrated by a regular analysis of our thoughts. We are not able, by reason, to remove such objections and difficulties, because they relate, in some way or other, to subjects which are infinite, on which our minds must be lost. Therefore, nothing is more ridiculous than the vain confidence of certain men, who affect a kind of triumph, because we can make no reply to their objections. I find it disputed, whether I am certain of the existence of any other beings,

beside myself; whether a clock, or the machine of the universe, might not have been the work of chance. I see these things debated by philosophers. Yet, however great they may be as philosophers, after they have stated the reason of their doubts, I sometimes say within myself, that I am at a loss how to answer their sophistical refinements, but that I have seen men shut up as lunatics for less extravagant notions."

It must be acknowledged, that the puzzling objections which are urged against the doctrines of the Bible, are likely to have an influence too favorable to skepticism. It is therefore manifestly important that all Christians, and it is specially important that you who are devoted to the study of theology, and who must be conversant with the various difficulties which hang around almost every subject, should carefully inquire, in what way, or by what precautions, the mind can be most effectually guarded against that fearful influence. I might enlarge on this point. But I can do no more at present than to touch upon the following simple directions.

1. Fix it in your minds, that difficulties insurmountable to us, attend most of the truths of ethics and theology, — those which are most clear, practical and important, as well as the more obscure, speculative and uninteresting; and, therefore, that such difficulties are in reality no reason against the firmest faith.

2. Guard against a habit of ruminating perpetually upon the objections which are urged against the doctrines of religion, and accustom yourselves to dwell upon the plain, positive evidence by which they are supported. The mind is generally affected and imbued with the properties of that with which it is most conversant. Our feelings become gradually assimilated to the objects of our contemplation. The habit which some men have formed, of giving a disproportionate attention to the obscurities and difficulties of moral and religious truth, produces obscurity and difficulty in their own minds. Whenever a principle of Christianity is brought into view, suddenly their thoughts are turned away from the evidence of its truth, and seized with all the perplexities which have been bred by human or infernal ingenuity and corruption; in con-

sequence of which they are, in a great measure, debarred from the advantages and comforts of a steady, sound faith. Form a habit then of giving a fixed attention to the proof of a doctrine, without being distracted or disturbed by the objections with which it is assaulted. True, Christian faith is strong. It holds the doctrines of revelation with a firm grasp. It sees their beauty; it has experienced their worth; and it will not yield them up to the most eloquent and subtle opposer. Some may call this obstinacy. It is indeed as immovable as obstinacy itself, but on different grounds. Obstinacy is grounded on pride and self-conceit. It is unyielding, because yielding would imply an imperfection which it is unwilling to acknowledge, or because it has unreasonable confidence in opinions which it has once embraced. But Christian faith is unyielding, because it rests on the wisdom and veracity of God. It was exemplified in Abraham, who could not be moved by any seeming difficulties or impossibilities relative to the accomplishment of God's promise. And why? Because he had unwavering confidence in God. He fixed his eye so steadily on the divine veracity, that the objections of unbelief went for nothing. He did not so much as look at them. Such should be the firmness of our faith in the doctrines of revelation. We should rest immovably on the testimony of God. However cunning and plausible the objections which may assail us, we should adhere unvaryingly to divine truth — resolved, that as carnal reason did not give us our faith, it shall not take it away.

3. If you would be secured against the hurtful influence of the objections which attend the doctrines of revelation, you must treat those doctrines, not as mere speculations, but as practical truths. Right practice strengthens and confirms right faith, because it is a constant demonstration of its conformity with the truth. Without this practical demonstration, Christianity will be received at best with a wavering and inefficient faith. We see here, why we are less prone to doubt the common maxims which govern our conduct than those theories, which begin and end in the intellect. No man is so bewildered by sophistry, as to doubt the testimony of his senses, or the uniformity of the laws of nature; because the truth

of this testimony, and of this uniformity, is continually tested and confirmed by experience. And the experience of Christians equally confirms the truths of religion. If you make these truths practical — if you live under their influence, as the faithful servants of Christ do, no objections can shake the firmness of your faith.

Finally. Seek the divine guidance. This is your grand security. God is the Lord of the understanding, as well as of the heart. It is his Spirit that illuminates and guides believers. When we are involved in darkness, and perplexed with difficulties, and on the point of giving up our faith; a few rays of light, beaming from heaven, can dissipate our darkness and difficulties, and cause our understanding and heart delightfully to rest in divine truth.

LECTURE VI.

ON THE USE AND EXPLANATION OF THEOLOGICAL TERMS.

They who employ the common modes of speech respecting the doctrines of theology, have been charged with using words in an unintelligible and senseless manner. A loud cry has been raised against them, for pretending to believe propositions, the terms of which they do not understand; for introducing forms of expression which mean nothing, and so can be of no advantage. They expend their zeal and labor, it is said, upon unmeaning words, and keep the world in a contest about distinctions merely verbal. In Berkeley's Minute Philosopher, Alciphron comes forward with very ingenious declamation on this subject, with reference to the word *grace*, which he uses to signify a principle of holiness in the heart. "It is well known," he says, "that no point hath created more controversy in the church than this doctrine of grace. But one thing I should desire to be informed of, to wit; what is the clear and distinct idea marked by the word grace? To know this is surely an easy matter, provided there is an idea annexed to the term. And if there is not, it can be neither the subject of rational dispute, nor the object of real faith. Men may indeed impose upon themselves and others, and pretend to argue and believe, when at bottom there is no argument or belief, further than mere verbal trifling. Grace, taken in the vulgar sense, either for beauty or favor, I can easily understand. But when it denotes an active, vital, ruling principle, influencing the mind of man, distinct from every rational power or motive; I profess myself altogether unable to understand it, and therefore I cannot consent to any proposition

concerning it. I did cast an eye on the writings of some divines, and talked with others on the subject. But after all I had read or heard, I could make nothing of it, having always found, when I laid aside the word grace, and looked into my own mind, a perfect vacancy, or privation of all ideas. And I suspect that other men, if they examined what they call grace with the same exactness, would agree with me, that there is nothing in it but an empty name. Of the same kind are many other points respecting necessary articles of faith." Thus far Alciphron. Unitarian writers have frequently made similar remarks with reference to the language of Trinitarians.

Now all the declamation of this kind, which has been so lavishly poured out against the asserters of the Christian mysteries, evidently overlooks a very obvious and important distinction, viz. the distinction between clearly understanding the meaning or use of words, and fully comprehending the nature of those things to which they relate. Metaphysicians and philosophers agree to use words in relation to things, whose nature is acknowledged to be, in some respects, unknown and unknowable. Now it is perfectly plain, that no proper explanation can be given of a thing, in those respects in which it is unknown. The question is, whether that which is, in a greater or less degree, unknown and unknowable, can properly be referred to by a word. In order to answer this question, first answer another, namely, whether we can determine, that there is anything in the universe, the nature of which we do not fully understand. If it is manifest, that there is such a thing, then surely that thing may properly be denoted by some word. And we may, moreover, point out by a word, the very respect in which we do not understand it. Who will assert that a thing, whose nature is not fully known, is, to us, as though it did not exist; and therefore that we can have no occasion to make any word stand for it? Many subjects, which are obviously most interesting to man, involve things which lie far beyond the sphere of our knowledge. But both in Scripture and in common discourse, words are familiarly used respecting those very subjects.

What I have said of determining that something exists, of whose

nature we are, in some respects, ignorant, does not involve the absurdity of our knowing what is unknowable, or seeing what is invisible. It is only saying what an eminent Christian philosopher said, that, as the eye can discover the limits of its own activity, and consequently that some objects are disproportioned to it; so we can judge, by an inward sense, that some things surpass the power of our mind, or the limits of our knowledge. This we can do just as easily, as we can determine the limits of our corporeal strength. Who finds any difficulty in ascertaining, that he is unable to move a mountain, or that moving a mountain transcends his strength? And who finds it any more difficult to ascertain, that he is unable, by the utmost stretch of his understanding, to comprehend the perfection of God; in other words, that there is something in God, which transcends the largest extent of his knowledge? A man, having satisfied himself of this, can not only use the word *God*, or *Jehovah*, to denote the eternal and infinite Being, but can make some word stand for what is unknown, and use that word in various important propositions; as, God is of unsearchable wisdom; his love is incomprehensible; the greatness of his power who can understand. In such sentences, the words, unsearchable and incomprehensible do of themselves indicate, that there is something unknown and unknowable in the subject; or that we have attempted to extend our minds to a complete comprehension of God, but find that his perfections transcend our intellectual powers.

It is very often the case, that known attributes or effects are considered as implying a cause, or substance, which we know not, except as it appears in those attributes or effects. Thus we consider the phenomena of magnetism, as resulting from an invisible, imperceptible cause in the nature of the magnet; and doubtless colors, odors, and flavors result from a certain unknown composition of the bodies which we see, smell, and taste, or from a certain unknown disposition of the particles of matter composing them. To that unknown nature or constitution we may surely apply a word. And if any one inquires in what sense we use that word, or what it signifies; we answer, it signifies that very unknown nature or constitution. This is a fair explanation of the sense in

which we use the word. Accordingly we can never be charged, in such a case, with using a word without meaning; for we have said, it means that very unknown nature or constitution. Nor is this use of a word unintelligible, although the thing which it denotes is, in itself, above our knowledge.

It is not to be forgotten that things of this nature, though in themselves unknown, are understood by their effects, or related circumstances. And these effects, or related circumstances, are referred to and indicated by the words which are employed.

Of the general subject to which I have now called your attention, I give the following illustration. A child is early acquainted with his parents, and uses the words father and mother. And no one will deny that he uses these words intelligibly and properly. But what does he know respecting his parents? Does he know the origin of the relation existing between him and them? Does he know the grand design of the relation, as it respects the good of the church and society? Does he know the various obligations involved in the relation on his parents' side, and on his own? Does he know the consequences, which will follow from it, in this life, and in the life to come? Of all this the child, just beginning to speak, knows little or nothing. What then does he mean by the words father and mother? For what purpose does he use them? I answer, he uses them to signify all that he knows respecting his parents; all that their presence and their constant care and kindness have taught him. With some of the endearing circumstances of the relation which they bear to him, he has already become acquainted. He has experienced some of its beneficial effects. Of the rest he is ignorant. Yet he is taught to use and does very properly use the words denoting that relation. Ten years after, when his knowledge of his parents is greatly increased, he applies to them the same names. Now, as before, these names stand for all that he has learned respecting his parents. And after ten years more, he still employs the same words to express his more enlarged and mature knowledge of the origin, the nature, the circumstances, and effects of the parental relation.

On this example I offer a few remarks.

1. The words father and mother are, at the three periods mentioned, used in various senses, though not in senses which clash with each other. At first, the words are expressive, not of the relation in itself considered, but of some endearments attending it, or some beneficial consequences flowing from it. At subsequent stages of the child's improvement, the words become expressive of the same things in a higher degree, and of additional circumstances. The sense of the word is, in each case, suited to the degree of knowledge which the child has of his parents. And the additions which are, from time to time, made to the sense of the words, are always consistent with their original sense. We have here then what may properly be called a *growing* sense of words.

2. The words father and mother are used by the child as properly at one of the periods above mentioned, as at another. It is indeed true, that the signification is not so large at one period as at another. But it needs not, on that account, to be supposed less proper or less definite.

3. The words, when most limited in their sense, may have a very salutary influence, as they may be connected with rules of high obligation, and be so used as to enforce the most important duties. In short, they may be a means of regulating the temper and conduct of the child.

All this may be asserted, and with additional force, respecting the word God. First; this word may be used by a child, in a sense very different from that, in which it is used by a man of enlightened understanding. But the senses, though different, may be perfectly consistent. Secondly; a child may use the word as properly, as a man. And thirdly; the word, when employed by a child with the least extent of signification, may be of great use in exciting proper affections, begetting good habits, and forming rules to direct the actions of life.

As the subject before us is of fundamental importance, I shall confirm what I conceive to be just principles, by presenting, summarily, the views of Berkeley, in that very ingenious work, the Minute Philosopher. Euphranor undertakes to prove to Alciphron

the propriety of using certain terms, although no precise and adequate ideas can be formed of the nature of the things denoted by them. He does this by the example of the word *force*. Alciphron defines force to be that in bodies, which produces motion, and other sensible effects, and holds, that it is something distinct from those effects; but acknowledges, that he could form no precise idea of force, aside from its effects. Euphranor then proceeds to say; "But notwithstanding all this, it is certain that there are many speculations, reasonings, and disputes about this same *force*. And to explain its nature, and distinguish the several kinds of it, the terms gravity, reäction, vis inertia, vis insita, vis impressa, vis mortua, vis viva, impetus, momentum, solicitatio, conatus, and divers other such like expressions have been used by learned men; and no small controversies have arisen about the notions or definitions of these terms. It has puzzled men to know, whether force is spiritual or corporeal; whether it remains after action; how it is transferred from one body to another. Strange paradoxes have been formed about its nature, properties, and proportions. Upon the whole therefore, may we not pronounce, that excluding body, time, space, motion and all its sensible measures and effects, we shall find it as difficult to form an idea of *force*, as of *grace*. And yet — there are very evident propositions relating to force, which contain useful truths; for instance, that a body with conjunct forces, describes the diagonal of a parallelogram in the same time that it would the sides with separate forces. Is not this a principle of very extensive use? — Shall we deny that it is of use, because we have no distinct idea of the nature of force? or, that which we admit with regard to force, upon what pretence can we deny concerning grace? If there are queries, disputes, perplexities, diversity of opinions about the one, so there are about the other also. If we can form no precise, distinct idea of the one, so neither can we of the other. Ought we not therefore, by parity of reason, to conclude, that there may possibly be divers true and useful propositions concerning the one, as well as the other; and that grace may be an object of our faith, and influence our life, although we cannot attain a distinct idea of it, separate from God

the Author, from man the subject, and from virtue and piety its effects." — We might make the same remarks respecting disposition, propensity, or principle of action, and other things of like kind, when spoken of as distinct from all their operations or effects.

Proceeding in the same way, it is shown by that distinguished author, that a man may believe the doctrine of the Trinity; that is, that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are God, although he does not form in his mind any clear, abstract ideas of Trinity, substance or personality; provided that this doctrine of a Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier makes proper impressions on his mind, producing love, hope, gratitude and obedience, and thereby becomes an operative principle, influencing his life and actions. It is shown too that men may believe the divinity of our Saviour, or that in him God and man make one person, and be verily persuaded thereof, so far as for such faith to become a real principle of life and conduct; inasmuch as, by virtue of such persuasion, they submit to his government, believe his doctrine, and practice his precepts, although they frame no abstract idea of the union between the divine nature and the human, nor may be able to clear up the notion of person to the contentment of a philosopher. "To me," he says, "it seems evident, that if none but those, who could themselves explain the principle of individuation in man, or untie the knots and answer the objections which may be raised, even about human personal identity, would require us to explain the divine mysteries; we should not be often called upon for a clear and distinct idea of person in relation to the Trinity, nor would the difficulties on that head be often objected to our faith."

Suppose now an opposer of the common orthodox doctrine should recite, as many anti-trinitarian writers have done, the various explanations which have been given of divine personality and Trinity, and should assert the utter uselessness of all propositions and of all pretended faith respecting a subject so little understood, and so totally unexplained; I should deem it sufficient to make the following remarks.

1. All attempts, by ancient or modern divines, to explain metaphysically the nature or ground of that, which is called per-

sonality, Trinity, or unity in God, or to point out the philosophical difference between what is called person in God, and what is called being or substance, tend to nothing but to give play to an idle curiosity, to perplex the judgment, and expose the truth to the objections of unbelievers. To attempt an explanation of the divine mysteries in those respects, in which they are in their nature inexplicable, is not only useless, but hurtful. Sometimes it conduces to the excessive growth of the imagination, and renders the mind visionary. Sometimes it turns the mind away from momentous truths within its reach, and so prevents their salutary influence. And sometimes, by multiplying the difficulties attending religion, and showing the disagreement of its defenders, it tends to produce skepticism and infidelity.

2. Still it cannot be inferred, that those who have made these fruitless efforts to explain what is inexplicable, have not embraced important Scripture doctrines, and derived the best advantages from them. The failure of their attempts at explanation, may have had little or no influence upon the truth of the propositions which they have believed, or upon the practical effects of their faith; as the failure of philosophers to explain the nature of gravity, and the nature of the union between body and mind, has had no influence upon the truth or the utility of the practical doctrines, which they have laid down concerning those subjects.

3. I remark, that there can be no valid objection against using terms in theology in an *uncommon* and *peculiar* sense. This is done freely in the arts and sciences, with the concurrence of all learned men. And if it is allowable to take words from common discourse, and employ them in a peculiar or technical sense in the arts and sciences, why not in theology? Why may it not conduce as much in this case, as in the other, to our convenience, and our advancement in knowledge? Now what ignorance and weakness would any man betray, who should dispute and form conclusions about the technical words in the arts and sciences, on the supposition, that they are used in precisely the same sense, as in common discourse! Still greater is the ignorance and weakness which those men betray, who dispute and puzzle themselves with difficul-

ties about personality, Trinity, and unity in God, as though these terms must have exactly the same signification in theology, as in common speech. For it follows from the nature of the subject, that technical terms, yea, that all terms used in theology, must necessarily have a signification more distant from what they have in regard to the common affairs of life, than any technical words used in the arts and sciences. This general remark is, I think, sufficient to obviate a multitude of arguments and cavils, which derive all their plausibility and strength from understanding the peculiar scientific terms commonly used in theology, in the same sense, as when applied to ordinary subjects.

I have not by any means intended to intimate, that terms, taken from common language, and employed in an unusual manner in theology, ought not to be defined or explained. Explanations of words are highly important, and in many cases necessary, to prevent mistakes, to render our arguments intelligible, and to impart clearness to our discourse. But it is of great consequence to determine what constitutes a proper and sufficient definition or explanation of theological terms.

On this point my principal remark is, that we must first inquire, what knowledge we have of the particular subject in theology, to which the word under consideration is applied; and then make our definition or explanation correspond with our knowledge of the subject. If the word relates to a simple perception or emotion of the mind, a definition or explanation is not to be attempted, except as is common in dictionaries, by using a synonymous word.

If the word stands for some cause, or substance, which is, in itself, imperceptible to the human mind; then we explain it by saying, the word stands for such unknown cause or substance. But in such a case, the use of the word would be without meaning, were not that unknown cause or substance connected with some known properties, effects, or circumstances, and were not these intended to be indicated by the word. In every case like this, a proper explanation of the word requires, that we should clearly exhibit these related properties, effects, or circumstances. This is the main point. It is in this way a considerable part

of our most important explanations or definitions of words are formed. For example, I ask you to explain the word *force*, *gravity*, or *magnetism*. You say, it denotes that invisible power or property, from which result such particular effects. I ask you to explain the word *mind*, or *spirit*. You tell me, it is a power, substance, principle, or existence, and then enumerate some of its chief operations and properties. The explanation of the word *Jehovah*, or *God*, is made out in the same way. The word denotes that eternal cause, that intelligent almighty Being, who, though in himself unseen, makes himself known by such visible acts. And you need not vary from this general principle in explaining the theological terms Trinity, personality, and others concerning which the loudest clamor has been made. Trinity, you say, denotes a certain mode of the divine existence, or a certain distinction in the Godhead, which in itself is inscrutable. Here, as in numberless other cases, the word stands for something, which is in itself unknown. Should you however, stop here, the word would be wholly unexplained, and without use. But you proceed to point out the important results of this incomprehensible mode of the divine existence — results which are brought to view in the Scriptures; such as these; that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are the one God; that each of them possesses divine perfection; that these three engage together in transactions respecting redemption; that the Father sends the Son to save sinners; that the Son becomes the Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit the Sanctifier; that the Son and the Spirit as well as the Father, have distinct personal attributes, and are entitled to our supreme homage, our submission and our confidence, and that unspeakable blessings flow to believers from the love and agency of each. Now you come upon enlightened ground. Now you explain. That unknown mode of divine existence, called Trinity, is manifested in and by these consequences or results. You speak of it — you point it out by a word, with a reference to these results — results, which are plainly of immense importance, relating as they do, to the foundation of the Christian religion, and affording rules of extensive application, for the regulation of our affections and

conduct. A proper explanation of the sense of the word, Trinity, requires an enumeration of these related circumstances or results, with more or less particularity and fulness, according to the end you have in view. This being done, your explanation of the word Trinity is as real and proper and ought to be as satisfactory, as any definition which can be given of the word spirit, power, or unity in application either to God or man. And those who pretend that no proper explanation has been given, or can be given, of the words Trinity, person, effectual grace, native depravity, and other like words, or that there is any peculiar difficulty, attending the explanation of them, show, either that they are greatly wanting in fairness and candor, or that they have investigated the subjects of theology and metaphysics very superficially, or else that their heads are confused by giving a wrong direction to their studies, or by pushing their speculations to an unwarrantable and dangerous length.

LECTURE VII.

DANGERS TO BE AVOIDED IN ANALOGICAL REASONING.

My object in this Lecture is to guard your minds against the dangers which arise from analogical reasoning, when applied to the doctrines of religion.

Whenever analogical reasoning proceeds on the supposition of a *strict* analogy between the attributes and operations of God, and the attributes and actions of man; between the measures of the divine government and those of civil government, and between the nature and properties of the human soul and those of the material or animal world; then errors of one kind or another are sure to be the consequence.

Dr. Reid has shown, that no reasoning in metaphysics or mental philosophy, which is built on analogy, can be regarded as conclusive. And it follows from the very nature of religion, that analogical reasoning is more likely to lead us astray on this subject, than on any other.

It is a well known fact, that mankind have a strong propensity to form their arguments and opinions on religious subjects, as well as on others, from analogy. The causes of this propensity are various.

In the first place we have, by means of our senses, an early acquaintance with sensible objects. The common business of life leads us to a much more familiar intercourse with them, than with spiritual objects: "Hence we are apt to measure all things by them, and to ascribe to things most remote from matter, the qualities that belong to material things."

Besides this, the language which relates to the affairs of life, and especially that which relates to the subjects of religion, abounds with metaphors and similes, taken from the sensible world, and the common transactions of men. These figures of speech are all founded on *some* analogy, real or apparent, between sensible objects and spiritual — between our common transactions and the concerns of religion. If we consult the whole structure of language, and the etymology of many words, which are not generally regarded as metaphors, we shall find much which has tended to strengthen the impression of a very extensive analogy between the sensible and the spiritual world, and between common truth and the doctrines of religion.

Our propensity to analogical reasoning is still further strengthened by the influence of imagination and curiosity. We are naturally desirous of completely understanding the nature of every subject, and can hardly be persuaded to acquiesce in our limited intelligence. This earnest desire after knowledge frequently, in difficult cases, leads the imagination to seek relief, by resorting to things familiarly known, and drawing illustrations from them. We commonly find that men are inclined to found their arguments and systems upon analogy, in proportion to the warmth of their imagination, and the strength and impatience of their curiosity. The errors of Origen, the fanciful schemes of metaphysics adopted by the schools, and the no less fanciful ones adopted by some writers in modern times, have been owing, perhaps chiefly, to the supposition of analogies which do not exist.

Permit me to direct your careful attention to the fallacy of that kind of analogical reasoning, which is here intended. A little reflection will convince you that the metaphorical language of Scripture does not imply a *strict* analogy between those things, from which the metaphors are taken, and those which they are designed to illustrate. There is indeed some analogy; otherwise the metaphors would be forced and unintelligible. But the analogy is one which relates, not to metaphysical, but to moral and practical truth; and it is always to be limited by the drift of the discourse, and by what is otherwise known of the nature of the subject. In short,

the analogy on which the propriety and utility of metaphorical language depend, is one which common sense easily discovers, and is competent to restrict within its proper limits.

As the metaphorical language of Scripture is one of the principal occasions of that analogical reasoning, which has led to such dangerous results; it will be important to fix it in our minds, that Scripture metaphors imply no such exact analogy as has been supposed, and to consider the consequences which naturally follow from carrying the analogy too far.

For the purpose of illustrating the general principles which I wish to establish, relative to the right understanding of Scripture, I shall adduce a few plain examples, where all must agree as to the meaning of the metaphors, and the kind and degree of analogy implied.

Example 1. *God is a rock.* Here no man supposes a physical analogy between the nature of a rock, and the nature of God. But why is not such an analogy supposed? Because the drift of discourse does not lead to it, nor does the knowledge we possess of the two subjects admit of it. God, we know, is of a spiritual nature. In this respect he can bear no resemblance to a rock. God is intelligent, powerful, and active, and possesses every moral perfection. In all these respects he is far from resembling a rock. The metaphor is designed to illustrate an important practical truth. One of the obvious properties of a rock, namely its firmness, or stability, represents the strength and immutability of God, the stability of his government, and the protection and security he affords to those who trust in him. In this case, common sense, to which the Bible is addressed, easily discovers the meaning of the metaphor, and determines at once the analogy implied in it.

Example 2. *Christ calls his disciples his sheep.* No one supposes that this metaphor implies any resemblance with respect to bodily shape, or mental powers. If we only consider the relation which existed between a shepherd and his sheep — his affection and kindness towards them, the watchful care he exercised over them, and their attachment and obedience to him; we shall find no difficulty in understanding the metaphor. Common sense, pro-

perly instructed, is competent to discover and limit its signification.

Example 3. *Christ is a lamb.* "Behold the lamb of God." Here again, common sense, taking into view the latter part of the sentence, and other passages of Scripture, particularly the use made of the lamb in sacrifice, will be at no loss to determine the meaning of the metaphor. The innocence or holiness of Christ is doubtless implied. But the principal design of the metaphor is to represent Christ, as a sacrifice for sin.

In the last two examples, the metaphor is taken from the same animal. Yet common sense perceives, that the metaphor, in the one case, respects the animal as related to a shepherd; and in the other case, considered as a sacrifice for sin.

In these and other instances, in which the design of Scripture metaphors is obvious, every one sees what absurd and impious notions would flow from the supposition of a strict and complete analogy.

The same remarks apply to the allegories and parables of Scripture. I shall give only one instance, that of the *unjust judge.* What we are taught of the justice and holiness of God forbids the supposition of any analogy between his character, and that of an unjust judge. In ascertaining the sense of the parable, we therefore pass by the character of the judge, and other circumstances which are introduced merely to make the parable consistent with itself, and fix upon one point of similitude, namely, *the effect of persevering importunity.* And even here the analogy is to be limited. For the particular *manner*, in which the mind of an unjust judge is wearied and overcome by the importunity of a poor widow, is by no means like the manner, in which God is affected by prayer. But in regard to one point, that is, *success*, the importunate application of the widow to the unjust judge, and the importunate prayer of a believer to God, have a likeness. It is as though he had said; see how the poor widow prevailed over even an unjust judge by her importunity. And shall not God, who is infinitely righteous and merciful, listen to the humble and importunate prayers of his own children?

In the following examples, we find metaphors of a different cast; but we must judge of the analogy implied in the same way.

God is called our Father, our Governor or King, our Proprietor, our Physician, our Judge. These metaphors, all taken from different states of human life, cannot be supposed to represent, exactly and fully, either the nature of God, or the relations in which he stands to us. The information which we possess on the subject, forbids the supposition that there is a strict and perfect analogy between the relation of God to us, and that of a father to his children, of a king to his subjects, of a proprietor to his property, of a physician to his patients, or of a judge to those who are judged. The metaphors doubtless teach us, that God bears a relation to us, which may be *truly* though not *perfectly* represented by these different relations of human life; it may be truly represented in some respects — not as to the mode of God's agency in us and upon us, but as to the *reality* of it, the *benefits* resulting from it, and the consequent *obligations* upon us. The metaphors convey practical truths. They impressively teach us the authority and goodness of God, the various blessings which he bestows, and the love, gratitude and obedience which are due to him from his redeemed people.

In all these cases, it is easy to see how the intended analogy may be carried to an unwarrantable extent, and what absurdities may be thus grafted upon these metaphors. Take, for example, the relation of a *father*, which is so often ascribed to God, and see what use is made of it by the Universalist. God is our Father. But what father would see his children in a state of extreme distress and torment forever, when he had the power to relieve them? And who can suppose that God, the Father of his rational creatures, will suffer any of them to perish forever? Now by the same unwarrantable stretch of analogy, you might prove that God will never take away our life; because he is our Father; and no father, that has any paternal goodness, will kill his own children. In every such case, the imagination and the natural sensibilities, not restrained by knowledge and judgment, carry the resemblance to an improper length, and so occasion pernicious errors.

We are liable to the same mistake, when anger and revenge are ascribed to God. There is certainly a great dissimilitude between God and an angry and revengeful man. To imagine a *strict* analogy, would be to ascribe to God feelings, and a manner of acting, of which he is totally incapable. There is still an analogy in one point of view; that is, the effects of God's displeasure at sin may be truly represented by the effects of human anger and revenge; not indeed as to the *manner* in which those effects take place, but as to the *certainty* and *dreadfulness* of them. The analogy must be restricted in the same way, when God is called a man of war, and is likened to a raging lioness robbed of her young; and when he is said to repent and be grieved.

Sin is in Scripture represented as a *debt;* the atonement, as the *payment* of a debt; and divine pardon, as the *forgiveness* of a debt. In some respects there is a real analogy; but in each instance, the analogy must be determined by the nature of the subject. Neglect of this principle has occasioned strange and hurtful errors. The supposition of an exact and perfect resemblance between the atonement and the payment of a pecuniary debt, might lead us to deny the full extent of the provision made by the death of Christ for the salvation of mankind; or it might lead us to believe, that all men will finally be saved; or what is a still more shocking error, to believe that sinners are under no obligation to obey the divine law, and cannot be justly required to endure its penalty. If reasoning from analogy on this subject should be admitted without restriction, the opinions just alluded to could not be controverted. So important is it to keep analogy within due limits.

Some plausible errors respecting the depravity of man and his sanctification by the divine Spirit, and respecting other subjects, have been occasioned by pushing to an unreasonable extent, the analogy implied in Scripture metaphors. If sinners are, in all respects, like men literally dead; it is indeed absurd to represent them as under obligation to obey God, or to call upon them to repent. If the agency of God in converting men from sin to

holiness is, in all respects, like the agency of a potter in making vessels for honorable uses; then those who are converted must be altogether involuntary and unconscious, and cannot be considered as moral agents. And if the process of God in hardening the hearts or sinners, is, in all respects, like the agency of a man in hardening any substance, or like the process of a potter in making vessels for mean purposes; if God's blinding the eyes of the wicked is, in all respects, like a man's putting out the eyes of his neighbor; and if his leading them into temptation, is like a man's tempting his neighbor to sin; it would be impossible to see the blameworthiness of sinners, or the justice of their punishment. On all these points, the minds of men have sometimes been perplexed, and prejudiced against the truth, and various errors occasioned, merely by not considering the proper limitations of the analogy, implied in Scripture metaphors.

I shall proceed no further at present in pointing out the dangers to be avoided in analogical reasoning. In a subsequent Lecture, I shall advert again to the same general subject, in relation to the character of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity.

LECTURE VIII.

ON SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY.

In the present Lecture, I shall state briefly the reasons which appear to me of most weight in favor of exhibiting the truths of religion in a *systematic form.*

The first reason which I urge is, that *system is carried into every other branch of knowledge.* Every writer, and every living teacher, who gives instruction successfully in any branch of literature or science, does it systematically. And the more system there is, that is, the more perfectly the parts belonging to any subject, are connected and arranged according to their inherent nature, and their mutual relations, the greater will be the value of what is written or spoken, and the more highly will it be esteemed by men of sound judgment. Now, all the reason which there is for system in any case, exists in its full force in theology. And in fact, a systematic arrangement is even more important here than anywhere else, inasmuch as theology is more important than any other branch of knowledge, and a mistake, as to the nature and relations of its different doctrines, would be more pernicious than a mistake on any other subject.

Secondly. *The depth and thoroughness of religious knowledge, and the influence of truth upon the mind, will be best promoted by systematic instruction.*

On this point I make my appeal to facts. Look at two congregations of intelligent and attentive hearers, one of which is instructed by a minister, who has acquired the habit of thinking systematically, and, in the general course of his preaching, has a proper regard to logical connection and order — and the other, by

a minister, who, in the structure of his sermons and the arrangement of his subjects, is regardless of logical order; and you will find a marked difference in the growth of the two congregations in religious knowledge.

And what is still more to our purpose — let two classes of theological students be placed under two different teachers, one of whom gives instruction miscellaneously, with little or no regard to connection; while the other thinks and instructs in a strictly logical and scientific manner; and how manifest will be the difference between the two classes in respect to progress in the science of theology.

Thirdly. *System is evidently demanded by man's rational faculty.* Reasoning consists very much in placing different truths in their proper order, and making use of them for the illustration and support of each other, and for the discovery of less obvious truths. Man, who is distinguished by the faculty of reason, is strongly inclined to exercise it in searching out the inherent nature and properties of things and their relations to one another. And his intellectual pleasure is found pre-eminently, in the contemplation of what constitutes *system.* If a man has a cultivated, correct and active intellect, he will never be satisfied, while the truths belonging to any science lie before him in a loose, disconnected state. His curiosity will urge him on, from the knowledge of single facts to *scientific* knowledge, that is, a knowledge of things properly classified and arranged. In ethics, in theology, and in every branch of science, *reason demands system.*

Fourthly. *System in theology is required by the nature and the necessary relations of religious truths.* The truths of religion, from their very nature, sustain a relation to each other. They are, in fact, connected together. If there is any doctrine which does not come into this connection, it is not a truth. In other words, there is no truth which is not, from its very nature, connected with other truths. Take the proposition, *man is self-existent.* This proposition cannot hold a connection with the truths which are revealed in Scripture or made known by experience, respecting God, or man, or any other being. It is out of connec-

tion with everything which has the nature of truth and reality. It has no relation to any truth, except the relation of *repugnance*. Of course, it is not a truth. For if it were a truth, it would sustain to all other truths the relation of *consistency*.

Take the proposition, *God is not eternal — his existence had a beginning*. This proposition is out of connection with all other truths pertaining to God's attributes and works. It cannot be made to harmonize with them. You cannot suppose this to be true, without supposing the most important things, which are evident to reason, or revealed in Scripture, utterly false. If God did not exist eternally, it would have been impossible that he ever should exist, or that anything in creation should exist. The proposition then is false. And falsehood cannot stand in connection with truth.

But if you take any one of the whole circle of truths, you will find it has a relation to other truths; and that relation is the relation of harmony. It agrees with other truths, because itself is a truth. And this agreement of different truths, this relation of harmony between them, cannot be made to appear in a just and proper light, unless they are set forth in a systematic order. This orderly arrangement cannot be neglected without injury to every particular truth, as no truth which is not manifestly connected with other truths, will appear to be what it really is.

But I would have it distinctly understood, that whenever I speak in favor of theological systems, I refer to those which are substantially correct. You may well object against systems which are substantially incorrect. But because incorrect systems are to be condemned, it certainly does not follow that we should condemn those which are true and correct. The various systems of astronomy which prevailed among the ancients, were built on false hypotheses, and were contrary to facts. It is agreed, that such systems are to be rejected. But are we to reject the system of astronomy, which has been adopted in modern Europe?

If the systems of theology, now in use, were all false, then of course they would all be unsafe and pernicious. But even if this *were* the case — if a correct system of theology had never yet

been written, we could not conclude that it never will be written. We might hope that divines will, ere long, be raised up, who will entertain more just ideas of the doctrines of religion, and will be able, not only to avoid the errors which had deformed all previous systems, but to construct a body of divinity, which shall be worthy of the attention and the confidence of the Christian community. This, I say, we might hope, on the most unfavorable supposition.

But happily the fact is widely different. Most of the existing systems, ancient and modern, contain a great proportion of divine truth, and may be studied with advantage by intelligent Christians. I do not except those written by Catholic divines. But great improvements have been made in the structure of theological systems, since the Reformation. Those written by Calvin, Turrettine, Knapp, Dick, Hill, Dwight, and other distinguished divines, though not free from imperfection and error, have contributed much, and are adapted to contribute still more, to the advancement of theological knowledge. And I hope the labors of younger divines, now living, will be yet more successful, and will result in the framing of systems, which shall exhibit the principles of Christian Theology more truly and ably, and in more just connections and proportions, than any which have preceded. It cannot be doubted that every system, which sets forth the great doctrines of revelation with clearness and ability, though not entirely without faults, will be serviceable to the cause of truth. But it must not be forgotten, that so far as any system contains errors, even those which are not essential, its salutary influence will be diminished. Errors, though of minor consequence, are errors still, and will, more or less, mar the good effect of those truths with which they are intermingled.

But it is said, the use of system has a bad influence on the mind, by producing an unreasonable attachment to those particular opinions which are set forth, and thus closing the door against progress in knowledge.

The force of this objection depends entirely upon the character of the system which is used. If the system really contains the

truth — the truth exhibited in a just manner — then the study of it, and the adoption of its principles, cannot fail to have a good effect upon the mind. Let it produce a strong and unalterable attachment to the opinions set forth. The more strong and unalterable it is, the better. Believing a system which teaches and defends the doctrines of the Bible, and holding to it inflexibly, tends to enlighten and strengthen the intellect. Truth is the proper nutriment of the mind, and when received and digested, promotes the growth of all its faculties. And if by the study of a system of theology, we come to know more truth, or to know it more clearly, and to be more firmly established in it, than by pursuing study in a desultory, miscellaneous manner; then such study must contribute more to our improvement, both intellectual and moral. The study and belief of the doctrines of revelation in Scotland and America, where systems of divinity have been held in the highest estimation, have actually resulted in the advancement of knowledge and piety, far beyond what has taken place, where creeds and systems have been discarded.

One thing more. The doctrines of orthodoxy most evidently derive strength and influence, from being stated in the form of a regular system. And do not opposers of orthodoxy object to system on this very account — that is, because they know it to be a benefit to the doctrines which they oppose? Would they object to system, if employed only in favor of their own opinions?

You may say, there is *error in every system of theology*. Be it so. And is there not error, where men have broken away from all systems? Is there not error in the loose, miscellaneous books which have been written on the subject of religion, and in the thoughts and conversation of men who have nothing to do with system? And is there not *as much error* in the books which have been written in opposition to systems, as in the systems which have been opposed? Examine the authors who have opposed Calvin's Institutes, and see whether they are not chargeable with as many mistakes as Calvin. Think not then that you will keep yourselves from the contact of error, by abandoning systems, and declaiming against them.

It must be acknowledged, that there is error in all books containing orthodox systems, and in all orthodox books written miscellaneously and loosely. I ask how we can most surely detect and avoid error, and attain to the knowledge of pure, unadulterated truth? To satisfy yourselves on this point, compare Locke's Essay on the Understanding, with a score of works written unsystematically and disconnectedly on the same subject; and suppose an equal number of errors in Locke's work, and in the other works written on so different a plan. I hold, that the errors contained in a work on mental philosophy, written so systematically as that of Locke, may be much more easily detected and exposed than those which are scattered about in the other works. If an error comes before you in a disconnected, undefined, floating state, you will find it difficult to lay hold of it, to examine its nature and relations, and so to discover its inconsistency with this or that portion of truth. But if an error is placed by the side of a plain truth, the light of that truth will help you to discover it. Its being embodied in a regular system, which is mainly right, will enable you to see its falsity, — just as you discover a spot on a garment that is white and clean, or a fault in a portrait which, for the most part, is perfectly correct.

Let doctrines then be presented in an orderly, systematic manner, so that if they are true, their truth may be seen more clearly, and be impressed upon the mind more deeply, — and so that, if any errors are intermingled, the light of truth shining around them, may help you to discover and avoid them.

It has been said, that systematic theology tends to occasion differences and sects among Christians. The adherence of the orthodox to their system, and their zeal in promoting it, have been represented as a cause of division and strife.

This allegation reminds us of what Jesus said to his disciples: "Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother." But how happened it, that such consequences flowed from the propagation of the religion of Christ? Did the fault lie

in that religion, or in the depraved hearts of men? The obvious fact was, that a religion so holy as that of Christ, would be sure to meet with hostility from the wicked world. Truth would be opposed by error, and righteousness by unrighteousness. Now, I maintain that the doctrines of the orthodox, as set forth in their creeds and systems, are substantially true, and that it has been this predominant element of truth which has been an offence to the unbelieving. In those who really love the truth, the exhibition of it in a just and systematic form, will promote a more and more unwavering faith; and its natural tendency is to promote a *united* faith. To suppose that the use of a system or a creed has in itself a tendency to create division among Christians, is contrary to common sense and experience. And after all the lessons which have been learned from the history of past ages, those who entertain a cordial affection for the truth, will resort to a systematic statement of what they believe, as one of the best means of guarding against division, and promoting a permanent union. Every association of men, from Calvinists down to Humanitarians and Neologists, have a system of articles, whether of belief or unbelief, which they adopt. Indeed, how can men show what their faith is, or do anything to propagate it — and how can they pursue any measures to promote harmony among their own party, unless it is known what their opinions are? And how can this be well known, except by a statement from themselves in the form of a creed, or of a theological system? What can be more manifestly suited to communicate instruction, and to bind together those who belong to the same denomination, than a skilful outline and defence of the doctrines which they maintain?

It is to some extent the fashion of the age, to decry theological systems. This has been the case particularly with those who embrace Unitarian or Pelagian principles. But it is plain, that their objection really lies, not against *system* in the abstract, but against *such* a system as that of the orthodox. They may profess to reverence the Scriptures, and may pretend that an attachment to any system, particularly the common orthodox system, interferes with a due respect for the word of God. But how is it, in

fact? Who are the men in our country and in Europe, that manifest the most profound respect for the word of God, and the most ready submission to its dictates? Are they found among those, who declaim against the creeds and systems in common use? Is it not manifest, that those who show the highest and most sacred regard to the holy Scriptures, are generally those, who hold firmly to the common orthodox system? And it must evidently be so, if that system is substantially true. He who loves the truth contained in the Bible, will love the same truth, when found in works of human composure. If a man rejects the leading doctrines contained in the systems of the reformed churches, he must, I think, set aside, or undervalue the instructions of God's word. Devout and enlightened men among the orthodox, are attached to their theological systems, for this plain reason, that they implicitly yield to the authority of inspiration, and bring their understanding and heart to act in conformity with its infallible teachings.

Finally, it has been objected to system in theological writings, that *there is nothing like system in the Holy Scriptures.*

This allegation, taken in its full extent, is far from being true. Every one who carefully contemplates the works and dispensations of God, as they are exhibited in his word, will see clear marks of connection and order. As the divine works are in reality connected together in an orderly manner, constituting a great and perfect system; the sacred writings lay open that system before us, at least in its outlines, and in striking examples.

Let any one read the *History of Redemption*, drawn from the Scriptures by Edwards, and he will perceive, that a connected system of divine Providence is really, though informally and without technicalities, set forth in the sacred volume. The law and the gospel are, from their very nature, connected together, as parts of a vast scheme of moral government. The gospel presupposes the law. And the law implies a Law-giver. And a law requiring supreme love, supposes a Being worthy of supreme love, and moral agents who are bound to exercise it. A law announcing a penalty for transgression, implies that transgression is an evil which deserves a penalty, and that God, who is just and pow-

erful, will take care that the penalty is carried into effect. In these and other ways, the Scriptures make us acquainted with order and system in God's moral government. And while it is true, that they do not teach this system formally, they do yet make it manifest, that there is such a system, and they so far bring it to view, as to make it an object of devout contemplation, and the ground of a peaceful confidence.

But I must go further. There are in the Scriptures, numerous instances of a logical order and arrangement of subjects — striking passages, containing, on a larger or smaller scale, the substance of a system. The most remarkable examples of this, are found in the Epistle to the Romans. The different parts of the Epistle are manifestly related to one another, and are arranged in a very orderly manner. There is continuity of thought, and close reasoning. There is a regular concatenation of topics and arguments. And how complete, though exceedingly condensed, is the system of evangelical truth, here laid before us? Something like this is found, also, in other Epistles and in the Gospels. We have, first, the announcement and illustration of leading doctrines; and after this, deductions and practical applications. Sometimes this systematic arrangement and connection of subjects appear on a smaller scale, in the contents of a single chapter, or part of a chapter.

But if the allegation *were* true — if nothing like regular system appeared in the sacred writings, it would by no means disprove the utility of system in human compositions. The natural world is as truly the work of God, as the sacred volume. But who regards the original condition of things in the natural world, as any reason why we should leave them just as they are, and should never do anything to change their form, so as to fit them for the various uses of life? Because houses and ships do not spring up spontaneously from the earth, who thinks it improper to build them? The works of God in the physical world were created for the benefit of man. But man must use his skill to adapt them to the object. The same in religion. The design of revelation cannot be accomplished without the labor of preachers and writers.

And if men are to preach sermons and write books, they must do it in such a manner, as is best suited to the purposes of instruction. And if sermons and books in a systematic form are better adapted to communicate instruction, than in any other form, they must preach and write systematically.

The fact is, that God has made us intelligent, active beings, and has so constituted things in the natural creation as to leave large room for human agency; and, happy for us, to make that agency necessary. Science and practical utility go hand in hand. And they are both advanced, in proportion to the diligence and skill, with which men employ their faculties upon the materials furnished for them in the works of God. All the improvements which have been made in the affairs of social and domestic life, and which conduce so much to our convenience and comfort, have resulted from the efforts of men, to give form and direction to the substances and powers which are found to exist in the creation. And if any objection lies against system in theology, because system in the common human form is not found in Scripture; it lies against all use of human agency in teaching and propagating the principles of natural science. And if the objection should be considered as valid, and should exert its full influence in physical science and theology; the result would be, that man, who is endued with such noble faculties, both for reasoning and for useful action, would be shut out both from reasoning and action, and would be reduced to the wretchedness of ignorance, stupidity, and indolence.

LECTURE IX.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES. OBJECTIONS OBVIATED.*

THERE is no subject, which is more intimately connected with the great controversy in Christian countries at the present day, and none which in its various bearings is more interesting, than that which we are now to consider. Our views of the Christian religion will depend very much on the opinions we entertain of the inspiration of the Scriptures. For if the Scriptures were written by men who enjoyed the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit; then they are truly *the word of God, and a perfect standard of faith and practice.* The doctrines and laws which they contain, are settled by the highest authority in the universe; and our business is, not to sit in judgment upon these doctrines and laws, to determine whether they are right or wrong, but to understand, believe, and obey them. As soon as we discover the sense of an inspired book, we are bound to yield it our cordial assent, not indeed because we

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* In the common treatises on the evidences of revelation, the *genuineness and authenticity* of the Scriptures are considered, and that very properly, before entering on the subject of their *inspiration.* And this was the order uniformly observed by the author in his Lecture room. But for the reason hinted at in the preface, these previous topics are here omitted. Lardner, Butler, Paley, Leslie, Chalmers, Wilson, Alexander, and many other writers, have published larger or smaller treatises of great value on these subjects, and have supported the truth by a strength and completeness of argument, seldom equalled in any department of knowledge. The works of these excellent authors are accessible to theological students, many of them to the community at large, and some of them are studied by the youth in our colleges, academies, and schools. In the following Lectures on Inspiration, it is assumed that the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures have been satisfactorily proved, and are commonly understood and admitted.

could make out that sense by the exercise of our own unaided reason, but simply on the authority of God. Our belief, resting on such a basis, is not to be moved aside by any difficulties or objections which the wisdom of this world can suggest.

But the moment men start from this high position, *that the Scriptures are divinely inspired*, they cease to have a sure and infallible standard for their faith, and are thrown back upon human reason or human ignorance as their guide. Not regarding the Bible as the word of God, they will feel at liberty to doubt or deny any of its decisions if contrary to their own preconceived opinions; and the most they will do, will be to use it as they do other books, to assist them in forming a system of religion for themselves.

The question whether the common doctrine of inspiration is true, is therefore of vast importance. The particular decision which is adopted on this question, will have a direct and sensible influence upon the manner, in which the holy Scriptures will be perused by the common Christian, and studied and interpreted by the theologian and the critic; and upon the manner in which Christianity will be exhibited by the preacher, and apprehended and received by the hearer. Everything which pertains to the doctrines and precepts of religion, and to the faith and practice of those who embrace it, will be modified by the particular opinions which are entertained respecting the inspiration of the Scriptures. All the different grades of opinion which may prevail on this subject, from the direct denial of any supernatural guidance, to the cordial belief of a plenary inspiration, will be found to produce their appropriate effect upon those who maintain them.

Considering then that the subject before us is adapted to exert so powerful an influence, and will so extensively affect the welfare of the church and the world; we ought surely to examine it with diligence and candor. And we are under peculiar obligations to do this at the present day, because this subject is rising to higher and higher importance, and plainly appears to be forming the dividing line between those who adhere to the doctrines of grace held by our forefathers, and those who reject them.

There are some who openly discard the doctrine, that the Holy

Scriptures were written under a special divine guidance. There are others who profess to believe the doctrine of Inspiration, who yet have no clear and definite views of it, or of the manner in which it is to be proved. And there are not a few whose minds are in a state of doubt and perplexity on the subject. While others, even among those who are possessed of genius and learning, and who make the sacred volume a subject of intense study, maintain opinions respecting its inspiration, which are inconsistent with its infallibility and divine authority, and which really sink it to a level with mere human productions.

It must, therefore, be regarded as of the highest consequence, that we should correctly understand the doctrine of divine inspiration, and should be able to maintain it, not only against the sophistry and impiety of infidels, but against what are quite as dangerous — the errors of a lax and skeptical theology.

My object is to offer such explanations and reasonings on this subject as shall be suited to aid your inquiries after the truth, to obviate objections and difficulties, and to establish your faith in the word of God.

I shall begin with some inquiries as to *the mode of reasoning, proper to be used in relation to this subject.*

First. *Do miracles prove the inspiration of those who perform them?*

Miracles, as commonly understood, are visible effects produced, not according to the established laws of nature, but by a special and preternatural operation of divine power. By such an agency, God gives an intelligible and certain testimony to the truth of those whom he employs as instruments in miraculous operations. He does as much as to make a public declaration, that they have been commissioned by him as his messengers; and that what they say is infallibly true, and is invested with divine authority. Thus, in the contest of Elijah with the prophets of Baal, the miracle which he performed, or rather which God performed by him, was a public demonstration, that he was a true prophet, and that the God whom he worshipped, was the true God. Thus, too, the miracles which Jesus performed, proved that he was the Messiah, as he claimed

to be, and that all his declarations were true. Miracles, then, clearly prove the divine commission of those who perform them, and the truth and authority of what they teach. And if they claim to be inspired, their miracles furnish satisfactory proof of the truth of their claim. If they teach any doctrines, or foretell future events, their miracles entitle them to our full confidence, and invest their doctrines and predictions with divine authority.

Secondly. *Can the inspiration of the sacred writers be proved from the excellence of what they wrote?*

Answer. We find great excellence in many books which no one supposes to be inspired. It is clear, then, that merely writing a book which contains excellent doctrines and precepts, and which exhibits them in an impressive manner, cannot be deemed sufficient proof of the inspiration of the writer. It is true, that if a writer is under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, his doctrines will be pure and excellent. But no decisive argument in favor of the inspiration of any writer, can be drawn from the excellence of the doctrines he teaches, unless it can be shown, that it was impossible for him to come to the knowledge of those doctrines by natural means. In regard to various predictions contained in the Bible, this can be proved. So that the argument in favor of the inspiration of the prophets is perfectly clear. But the excellence of other things contained in the Bible, cannot be a clear proof of inspiration unless it is evident, that it was beyond the power of the writers to know them, and to commit them to writing, without supernatural aid.

It is easy to make this evident in regard to many of the great principles revealed in the word of God. But it is not easy to do it in regard to all which the Bible contains.

The argument drawn from the character of the writers, and the care of divine providence in the preservation of the sacred books, is of great consequence, and, in connection with other things, must be regarded as conclusive evidence. These circumstances are indispensable to our belief of the doctrine of inspiration. For were not the Scriptures marked with purity and excellence; did they not proceed from holy men; and had they not all the quali-

ties which the writers ascribe to them; we could not admit them to be inspired, how confidently soever the writers might assert their inspiration. At the same time, we must remember that other books can be found, which were written by good men, and which are remarkable for their purity and sublimity, and for the influence they have had in promoting human happiness, but which we by no means consider to be divinely inspired.

"These two positions," says Dr. Knapp, "*the* CONTENTS *of the sacred books, or the* DOCTRINES *taught in them, are of divine origin*, and, *the* BOOKS THEMSELVES *are given by inspiration of God*, are not the same, but need to be carefully distinguished. It does not follow from the arguments which prove the *doctrines* of the Scriptures to be divine, that the *books themselves* were written under a divine impulse. A revealed truth may be taught in any book; but it does not follow that the book itself is divine. We might be convinced of the truth and divinity of the Christian religion, from the mere genuineness of the books of the New Testament, and the credibility of the authors. The divinity of the Christian religion can therefore be conceived, independently of the inspiration of the Bible. This distinction was made as early as the time of Melancthon."

The argument to which I attach the greatest importance is *the testimony of the sacred writers themselves respecting their own inspiration*. Their testimony, whether expressed or implied, is as worthy of credit on this subject, as on any other. They are unquestionably as able to inform us, under what influence the Scriptures were written, especially considering that their own agency was employed in writing them, as they are to teach us the doctrines of Christianity, or to make known distant future events. The inspiration of the sacred writers is a matter of fact. For information respecting this fact, and respecting its extent, its degree, and its results, we are dependent mainly on their testimony.

It must be considered as a given point, that the sacred writers are competent to give testimony in relation to the subject under discussion, and that their testimony is entitled to entire credit. If proof of their credibility is called for, I refer ultimately to the

miracles which they performed, for the very purpose of proving their divine commission, and the truth and authority of what they taught. Miracles furnish an obvious and satisfactory proof of all this. They show the hand of God in a special manner. They are the testimony of God, and always have been, and always will be received as such. And as he is a Being of infinite intelligence and perfect veracity, his testimony must be regarded as the highest possible evidence.

We are not in this place to enter on the consideration of those arguments which prove the Scriptures to contain a revelation from God, *in opposition to deists*. Those arguments are presented with great perspicuity and force by a variety of authors, who have undertaken to defend the Christian religion. In my reasoning on the question, whether the writers of the Scriptures were divinely inspired, I consider the genuineness, truth, and authority of the Scriptures as proved; and for evidence in support of the doctrine which I maintain, I rely principally on the information which the writers themselves have given.*

But before proceeding to the *proof* of inspiration, I shall notice some prepossessions and mistakes which it is important to avoid, and suggest some cautions which ought to be observed. In this way I hope to do something towards freeing your minds from needless doubt and perplexity, and preparing you more justly to weigh the arguments which will be offered in support of the doctrine under consideration.

1. We are not to suppose that we can exactly understand the *manner* in which the mind is affected by inspiration of God, or *how any man knows* that he is under infallible divine guidance, and that his declarations are clothed with divine authority.

We have never been the subjects of a supernatural inspiration ourselves, and of course we cannot understand what it is by our own experience. Isaiah and Paul, and others had, probably, as

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* The Rev. Daniel Wilson in his Lectures, makes his appeal directly to the sacred writers themselves. "What do the writers of the holy books teach us upon the subject of inspiration? What can we reasonably infer from the testimony of our Lord and his Apostles concerning it?"

real and definite a consciousness of the peculiar state of their own minds, and the manner in which they were affected, when under the supernatural influence of the Spirit, as at any other time. But the effect produced upon their thoughts, and the general state of their minds, when under that supernatural influence, must have been widely different from anything which we have ever experienced; and we may be as unable to form a definite conception of it, as of the peculiar state of an angel's mind, and of the manner in which he thinks and acquires knowledge. How is it possible for us to have a clear notion of the manner in which the mind is affected by inspiration, without being inspired ourselves? Indeed, how can we form a clear conception of *any* state of mind, without being the subjects of it?

If it should be said, that we could learn the manner in which divine inspiration affects the mind, from a description of it by those who know what it is by experience; it would be sufficient to reply, that we have no such description. Neither Paul, nor Isaiah, nor any other, has informed us how his mind was affected by the supernatural influence which acted upon him, or in what way it was made certain to his mind, that he was divinely inspired. And even if an inspired writer had given a particular description of the effect of inspiration on his own mind, the nature of the subject is such that, in all probability, no description could convey any just notion of it to our minds. As it is the fact then, that we never had the state of mind produced by inspiration; and as no exact description has been given of that state of mind in others; and as we should probably be unable to understand the real import of the language, by which an inspired man might attempt to describe his state of mind to us; we must be content to remain without exact knowledge on the subject. And we have reason to apprehend, that any attempt of ours to form definite conceptions of it, would lead us into error.

If these views are correct, then our inability to understand exactly the manner of inspiration should not be suffered to diminish our confidence in its reality, or its practical results. On the ground of the evidence which we possess, we ought to entertain

as full a belief of the fact, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and, consequently, that the doctrines and laws which it contains are marked with infallibility and divine authority, as though we knew perfectly how a supernatural divine influence affected the minds of the writers, or even as though we ourselves had written the Scriptures under a guidance which we knew to be infallible and divine.

2. It does by no means appear, that the inspiration of the sacred writers *was confined to the revelation of new truths.*

In many instances, it is manifestly suitable and important that God should influence his servants to declare old truths as well as new ones, provided those old truths are necessary to promote the best interests of man. The supposition is perfectly reasonable, that God may have as real an agency in moving his prophets to write truths with which they were before acquainted, and in affording them such guidance as to secure them against all mistake, and render their communications exactly agreeable to his will, as in enabling them to write truths never before made known. Christ promised to give his apostles a heavenly Teacher, who should enable them rightly to perform every part of their office, and among other things, *to assist their memories.* It seems to have been a principal object of that promised assistance of the Spirit, so to guide the apostles, that they should truly recollect the things which they had before seen and heard, and should infallibly, and in the best manner, communicate them, or necessary parts of them, both orally and by writing, for the benefit of others.

This principle, if well fixed in your minds, will be of great use in relieving you from needless difficulties respecting the inspiration of various parts of the Bible. It appears that the historical books of the Old Testament, generally, were composed either from traditions with which the writers were familiar, or from pre-existent records. But what difficulty can this circumstance occasion in regard to their inspiration? Was it not important that the Holy Spirit should assist the memories and other faculties of the writers, in making a suitable record of that with which they were already acquainted? Was it not important that he should so

influence and guide them, that they should write *just so much, and in just such a manner*, as he saw to be best adapted to answer the ends intended? And what reason have we to suppose that they would ever have done all this, without divine guidance? If we examine the public addresses of the apostles recorded in the Scriptures, we shall find they were composed, for the most part, of facts, arguments, and conclusions, which, in all probability, had been familiar to the apostles before. Be it so. Is there any difficulty in supposing that, in all such cases, the divine Spirit afforded them such direction, that they should judge with infallible wisdom what was proper to be said, and that they should speak according to the will of God? Was not the Spirit promised for this very purpose? "Take no thought *how* or *what* ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour *what* ye shall speak. For it is not *you* that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." The influence of the Spirit here promised, instead of being limited to the revelation of things before unknown, was to guide them in giving an infallible testimony to truths which they had before learned. He was to teach them both "*how* and *what* they should speak," in reference to any portion of divine truth which the occasion might demand. The same was necessary as to all parts of Scripture. For no human wisdom was competent to determine, what and how men should write for the benefit of all future ages. How widely different would be the judgment of any man now living, from the wisdom which presided over the writing of the Scriptures! If left to form an opinion on the subject, independently of what we know to be the decision of divine wisdom, would not every man think that various things included in the sacred volume, ought to have been omitted? As an instance, I might mention those naked histories of human weakness, folly, and impurity, which infidelity has so often made the subject of profane ridicule. God, who perfectly knows the nature of man, and all his wants and dangers, and how to promote his eternal interests in the best manner, doubtless saw that important ends would be answered by those parts of Scripture, which we should have thought least calculated to do good. And I am fully per-

suaded that we can, in no way, account satisfactorily for the writing of *such a book*, *by such men*, or by *any* men, without the supposition of a special divine interference.

It will be remembered that my reasoning here is meant for those, who believe that the Bible is the word of God, and that it is, in all respects, what the wisdom of God chose that it should be; of course, that it is free from faults, and perfectly adapted to promote the ends of a divine revelation. It is with *Christians*, that my reasoning is concerned. Now, clearly, *Christians* can have no reason to presume, that the agency of the divine Spirit in the sacred writers, must have been confined to the single purpose of revealing new truths; and no reason to object to the position, that those writers were constantly under the direction of divine wisdom, even in making a record of those things with which they were before acquainted. For in making this record so as perfectly to answer the ends of infinite wisdom, it was necessary there should be such an adaptation of it to the exigencies of the church in all ages, as must have required the presiding influence of an omniscient mind — must have required it as really, as the first communication of those truths which lay beyond the discovery of human reason. It can then be no valid objection against the inspiration of any parts of the Bible, that they contain truths which the writers might have known, either by natural means, without the help of any divine revelation, or by means of a revelation before made to others. Accordingly, if the sacred writers declare, without suggesting any qualification, that *all Scripture* is given by inspiration of God; we have no good reason so to qualify and restrict the meaning of their declaration, that it shall apply to those parts only, in which a revelation of new truths was made.

3. It is no objection against the inspiration of the Scriptures, that *they were written in a language completely human*, *and that they exhibit all the varieties in the mode of writing*, *which are common in other works.*

No one can doubt that it was possible for God, had he judged best, to give us sacred books in a very different form. He could have influenced men to give instruction to the world, in a style

widely different from what they were accustomed to use. If he had chosen, that his messengers should speak in a language consisting of common human words; he could still have led them to give those words an uncommon structure; or if the structure was according to common usage, he could have caused it to be perfectly uniform; so that, although coming from men of various talents and various tastes, it should be as though it all came from one and the same man. But a little reflection will satisfy any one, that a revelation made in either of these ways would not be consistent with the wisdom of God, nor adapted most effectually to promote the welfare of the world.

If God gives instruction to men, he must give it in language which men can understand. Should divine instruction be conveyed in language which is super-human, it would then become necessary, either that it should be translated into human language, or that the human mind should be enabled to understand it by some supernatural endowments. The supposition of Shaftsbury, that a style of writing essentially different from what is in common use, would be necessary in a divine revelation, is manifestly inconsistent, and cannot for a moment be admitted. And as it is perfectly clear, that a variety in the mode of writing is calculated to answer important ends, which could not be answered by a perfect uniformity; it would be reasonable to expect, that God would employ such a variety, if he wished to make special communications to men; — that he would sometimes give instruction by history; sometimes by poetry; sometimes by allegory; sometimes by proverbs or maxims; sometimes by rational arguments; sometimes by impassioned appeals to the heart; and sometimes in other ways; and that he would make use of all those figures of speech, which are suited to make a deep impression on the mind, or to rouse its dormant faculties. The propriety and utility of this variety in the mode of conveying truth, result from the constitution which God himself has given to the human mind. And surely it is but natural to expect that, in all his instructions, he will have a regard to the nature which he has given to man; and that he will employ that mode of teaching, which shall be best

adapted to produce the desired effect. When, therefore, we find that the writers of the sacred volume made use of human language, and of all the common modes of writing; most surely, we cannot consider it as affording any proof that those writers were not under the guidance of the divine Spirit. See, says the objector, how each writer expresses himself naturally in his own way, just as all uninspired writers are accustomed to do. And see too, we might reply, how each apostle when speaking before rulers, with the promised aid of the Holy Spirit, spoke naturally, *with his own voice*, and in his own way. There is no more objection to inspiration in one case, than in the other. The mental faculties and habits of the apostles, their style, their voice, their mode of speech, all remained as they were. What then had the divine Spirit to do? What was the work which appertained to him? We reply, his work was, so to direct the apostles in the use of their own talents and habits, their style, their voice, and all their peculiar endowments, that they should speak or write, each in his own way, just what God would have them speak or write, for the good of the church in all ages.

The fact, that the individual peculiarities of the sacred penmen are every where so plainly impressed on their writings, is one of the most common objections to the doctrine of inspiration, and one which has obtained a deep lodgment in the minds of some intelligent Christians. We have frequently noticed such individual peculiarities; and we regard them as entirely consistent with the highest views of divine inspiration. From the following quotation, and from many others which might be made, it appears, that so excellent an author as Gaussen goes as far as Henderson, or any other writer, in asserting the remarkable individual characteristics referred to.

Gaussen says, "although the title of each book should not indicate to us that we are passing from one author to another, yet we could quickly discover, by the change of their character, that a new hand has taken the pen. It is perfectly easy to recognize each one of them, although they speak of the same Master, teach the same doctrines, and relate the same incidents." But how

does this prove that Scripture is not in all respects inspired? "So far are we," says this author, "from overlooking human individuality, everywhere impressed on our sacred books, that, on the contrary, it is with profound gratitude, and with an ever-increasing admiration, that we regard this living, real, human character infused so charmingly into every part of the word of God. —We admit the fact; and we see in it clear proof of the divine wisdom which dictated the Scriptures."

Those who urge the objection above mentioned, are plainly inconsistent with themselves. For, while they deny the plenary inspiration of some parts of Scripture, *because they have these marks of individuality*, they acknowledge inspiration in the fullest sense in other parts, particularly in the prophecies, where this individuality of the writers is equally apparent.

In truth, what can be more consonant with our best views of the wisdom of God, or with the general analogy of his works, than that he should make use of the thoughts, the memories, the peculiar talents, tastes and feelings of his servants in recording his word for the instruction of men? Why should he not associate the peculiarities of their personal character with what they write under his infallible guidance? But, independently of our reasoning, this matter is decided by the Bible itself. "All Scripture is divinely inspired;" and it is all the word of God. And it is none the less the word of God, and none the less inspired, because it comes to us in the language of Moses, and David, and Paul, and the other sacred writers. "It is God who speaks to us, but it is also man; it is man, but it is also God." The word of God, in order to be intelligible and profitable to us, "must be uttered by mortal tongues, and be written by mortal hands, and must put on the features of human thoughts. This blending of humanity and divinity in the Scriptures reminds us of the majesty and the condescension of God. Viewed in this light, the word of God has unequalled beauties, and exerts an unequalled power over our hearts."

4. It is no argument against the doctrine of inspiration, understood even in the highest sense, *that in writing the Scriptures the sacred penmen made use of their own faculties.*

Had God seen it to be wise and proper, he could have produced a book of sacred instructions by a miraculous act of his power, without any instrumentality whatever, as he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone. Or he could have caused the book to be written by men destitute of any conceptions of what they wrote, using them as unintelligent, passive instruments. He could have used their hands to write, or their organs of speech to utter the instruction he would give, without any use of their mental faculties. Or if he had chosen that the men employed in writing the book, should understand what they wrote, and should express in their writing the conceptions of their own minds; he could have produced those conceptions by an immediate act of his power, without any kind of exertion or activity on their part. But neither of these methods would agree with what we know of the common method of divine operation. And neither of them would be suited to the end which divine benevolence aims to accomplish.

From the nature of the case, it would seem altogether probable, that if God intended to communicate instruction to the world, he would employ human beings as instruments, and would employ them as intelligent, active instruments, and would excite them to use their intellectual and moral powers in making the communication. All that we have seen of the divine conduct in other respects, would lead us to expect this. And what possible objection can there be against it? A revelation made in the manner here supposed, may be as infallible, and in all respects as perfect, as if made in any other way. For surely God can so guide and superintend the mental and bodily powers of men, as to produce, through them, just such a book as he wishes to produce, and just such as he would produce, if he employed no agency but his own. For example; he could exert such an influence and control over the mind of Isaiah and Paul, that the commands and promises, given by them, should be as perfectly agreeable to his will, and clothed with as high an authority, as though he had written them himself on tables of stone, as he did the Decalogue.

This being the case, it follows, that the abundant evidence which the sacred volume contains, that the writers made a diligent use

of their own mental and bodily powers, furnishes no argument against the position, that they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

5. It is no objection against the inspiration of the Scriptures, *that they contain many things which are, in themselves, of little or no consequence.*

Things which are of small consequence in themselves, may be of great consequence, when considered in all their relations. Great effects result from little causes. And these little causes acquire a relative importance, in proportion to the greatness of the effects resulting from them. A single thought, a dream, the motion of a finger or a pebble, may occasion mighty events, and in a history of mighty events, may deserve to be particularly mentioned. If small things are visibly connected with great, we perceive at once the propriety of their being distinctly noticed. And when they are not connected in any way which is at present visible to us; still there may be a connection, and that connection which is always perfectly known to God, may ultimately become manifest to us. And those things which we are accustomed to consider as small, may, in reality, be as important, as if their connection with other things were now fully known to us; and it may be as important that history should record them. Indeed it may be that, without recording them, history could not have a perfect agreement with the truth. For do not small things actually occur in the course of human affairs? Let any one survey his own life for a day or a week, and see if this is not the case. It is so even with prophets and apostles, as well as with others. There never was a man, whose life, from day to day, and from hour to hour, was chiefly made up of great actions and great events. Hence no history of human life could answer to the reality, without recording many little things. The writers of common history frequently make a selection of a few actions and events, which are remarkable and splendid, and omit others; and thus they make a representation, which is flattering to human pride, but which, as a whole, is not according to truth. In this respect, the writers of sacred history have a manifest superiority over all others. They take no pains

to give to human characters and events a splendor which is not real. They honestly relate the little things which occur in human life, as well as the great; the dishonorable, the vicious, and even the disgusting, as well as the honorable, and virtuous, and lovely. The picture which they draw is true, answering to the original.

Now the question is, whether the Scriptures shall, to a greater or less extent, contain a history of human life, and whether it shall be a true history, or a fiction. If a history of any portion of the human race, or of any period of the world, is necessary to the good of the church; then the benevolence of God must incline him so to influence the writers of the Bible, that they shall furnish such a history. And if God chooses to have a history of human affairs contained in his word, we have every reason to believe he will so assist and guide his servants, that they shall write a history exactly conformed to truth. And if conformed to truth, it must record many things which are neither great nor honorable.

The same remarks may be made on those parts of Scripture, which contain maxims, — sentiments of small weight, — minute directions, — and little developments of thought or feeling. These things are evidently of real use. There are many cases of duty or difficulty, to which they are directly adapted, and for which we should not be well prepared without them. They are therefore important, as making a part of that book, which is intended to be a directory of human conduct. And who can doubt the goodness of God in causing a book to be written so as fully to answer the wants of man? And who can with any propriety say, that the Bible contains things too small to be worthy of the notice of God, when, in fact, those small things are essential to the perfection and the highest usefulness of a revelation? With just as much propriety might we object to the world's being the work of God, because it contains many little things; and we might ask, who can suppose that God would ever exert an agency, or have any concern, in things of such a nature? But we know that God has in fact created and sustained the world, and all that is in it; and hence we infer, that it is perfectly consistent with his infinite majesty, that he should create, sustain, and constantly regard little

things, as well as great. And if God may consistently have an agency in the production of little things in the natural world; why not in the sacred writings?

But if, after all, any one shall assert, that there are things in the Bible, which are of no possible use as to the great ends of revelation, and therefore, that it is inconsistent to suppose, that those who wrote them had the guidance of the Holy Spirit; I would desire him first to specify the things referred to, and then to show, that they neither have been, nor can be, of any use. Suppose he fixes upon the passage, which has often been referred to as of no possible consequence, 2 Tim. 4: 13, in which Paul directs Timothy *to bring the cloak that he left at Troas, with the books, especially the parchments.* I would ask him whether the direction might not be very important to the comfort or usefulness of Paul, exposed as he was to cold and nakedness; and whether the books, *and especially the parchments*, might not be of use to the interests of the church, as they might contain copies of some of Paul's Epistles, or other writings of great moment. Or suppose any one refers to the counsel of Paul to Timothy, as a matter of no consequence — "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." Was not this counsel an expression of Paul's tender solicitude for the health and usefulness of Timothy? And was it not calculated to be an essential benefit to him? And is it not evidently adapted to be useful at the present day also, as it plainly shows in the first place, that Timothy was in the habit of abstaining wholly from strong drink, even from wine, (which was *then* doubtless the pure juice of the grape,) and that he needed a direction from an Apostle to influence him to drink even a *little;* — and secondly, as it shows, that the Apostle, did not direct Timothy to use even a *little wine*, except as a medicine in case of bodily infirmity.

6. It is no objection to the inspiration of the Scriptures, *that the real and full meaning of some passages was not known at the time they were written, or even that it remains unknown to the present day.*

In this respect, the same is true of the Scriptures as of the

natural world. There are many things in the creation, the nature and design of which lay concealed for thousands of years, and many which are, even at the present day, but imperfectly understood, or not understood at all. Notwithstanding this, it is true that God created them, and preserves them; and that they are designed for some important end. So, as to those things in Scripture which are not well understood; it may be that they will ultimately be understood, and that some special and additional good may result from them, in consequence of their having been so long involved in obscurity. Even during the time they are not understood, they may be of use, in promoting among good men a becoming sense of their limited knowledge, and in exciting them to diligent endeavors after higher acquisitions. And we know that God has by additional revelations, as well as by the course of his providence, and the well directed labors of his servants, often explained that which was before left designedly obscure.

If, therefore, we find ever so many things in the Bible, which we do not understand, (and there are such things, by the confession of all;) we are by no means to regard them as an objection to the inspiration of the writers. Our not understanding them may be owing to a faulty ignorance in us; an ignorance which persevering diligence might have removed. Or they may lie beyond the reach of our present capacity, and the capacity and means of information which any man now possesses, and may be reserved as subjects, on which the human mind is to exert its faculties successfully in future time. They may not be intended particularly for our use, but for the use of some following generation. So Peter suggests that, in some things, the prophets *ministered not to themselves, but to those who should come after.* Now suppose it pleases God, by his Spirit, to influence his servants to write some things which cannot be well understood in their day, but which are intended to be understood, and to be of special use, in future ages; this is no discredit to his wisdom or goodness. In fact, do not all our endeavors to arrive at a more perfect knowledge of the Scriptures imply, that hitherto they have been but imperfectly understood? And if we may consistently believe, that men who were divinely inspired wrote what

has hitherto been but imperfectly understood; why may we not believe that, in some instances, they wrote what for a time cannot be understood at all? What warrant have we to say, that if any thing is written, under Divine influence, for the benefit of the church, it must be so written that all men in all ages shall understand it?

7. *Instances of incorrectness in the present copies of the Scriptures* cannot be objected to the inspiration of the writers.

How can the fact, that God has not infallibly guided all the transcribers of his word, prove that he did not infallibly guide those who originally wrote it? We might as well say, that if those who first wrote the Bible were inspired; then all who have *received* and *read* it must have been inspired. Suppose men have committed mistakes, either intentional or unintentional, in making out copies of the Bible. Have they not made mistakes also in regard to every other work of God? But do the mistakes of men in regard to any works of God prove, that they are not his works? Nothing can be more certain, than that the inadvertence, or ignorance, or wickedness of man has marred many things, both in the natural and in the moral world, the original formation of which was owing wholly to the agency of God, and was a clear manifestation of his wisdom and benevolence. And what grounds have we to think that this may not be the case, in regard to a book given by divine inspiration, as well as in regard to other divine works?

To object to the inspiration of the Scriptures on account of *the inaccuracy of the translations, and the various readings of the ancient manuscript copies*, would be totally irrelevant. For what we assert is, the inspiration of the *original* Scriptures, not of the translations, or the ancient copies. The fact, that the Scriptures were divinely inspired, cannot be expunged or altered by any subsequent event. The very words of the decalogue were written by the finger of God, and none the less so because the manuscripts which transmit it to us contain some variations. The integrity of the copies has nothing to do with the inspiration of the original. It is, however, well known, that the variations are hardly worthy to be mentioned.

But if the copies of the Scriptures which we have, are not inspired, then how can the inspiration of the original writings avail to our benefit? The answer is, that, according to the best evidence, the original writings have been transmitted to us with remarkable fidelity, and that our present copies, so far as anything of consequence is concerned, agree with the writings as they came from inspired men; so that, through the gracious care of divine providence, the Scriptures now in use are, in all important respects, the Scriptures which were given by inspiration of God, and are stamped with divine authority. In this matter, we stand on the same footing with the apostles. For when they spoke of the Scriptures, they doubtless referred to the copies which had been made and preserved among the Jews, not to the original manuscripts written by Moses and the prophets.

8. *Instances of apparent disagreement among the different writers of the sacred volume, and of apparent contradiction in the same writers*, are no valid objection against their inspiration.

We can satisfactorily account for an *appearance* of disagreement, where there is no disagreement in reality. An appearance of contradiction often vanishes on inquiry; and the agreement becomes more sensible and striking, than if there had never been any appearance of the contrary. This is the case with most of the apparent discrepancies found in the Scriptures. Thorough investigation has made it manifest, that those passages which appeared inconsistent, are perfectly reconcilable with each other. Now it is always regarded as a circumstance in favor of the credibility of witnesses, when their testimony, which at first appears contradictory, is found, on careful inquiry, to be consistent.

But suppose there are some instances in which we are unable to discover a perfect consistency between different parts of Scripture. We cannot on this account decide against the inspiration of the writers; because further inquiry, and a better method of interpreting the sacred writings, may help us to discover a consistency, which at present does not appear. And if, in *the present copies* of the Scriptures there are some *real* contradictions; this cannot prove that the original writings were not divinely inspired; because these

contradictions may be owing to the mistakes of transcribers. And it is well known, that the most remarkable instances of contradiction are found in those words or sentences, in which a mistake in copying might have been most easily made. Considering how the Scriptures abound with details of names, numbers, facts, and minute circumstances, it would seem to be a matter of wonder, that the copyists committed no more mistakes, rather than that they committed so many.

LECTURE X.

MANNER OF QUOTING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT BY THE WRITERS OF THE NEW.

9. *The manner in which the writers of the New Testament make quotations from the Old, is urged as an objection against their inspiration.*

The objection, to have any force, must be grounded on some incorrectness in the quotations. But I maintain that there is no such incorrectness — that the manner in which the writers of the New Testament quote from the Old, is conformed to good use, and is suited to accomplish the ends which are sought; and consequently, that their manner of quoting is no evidence against their inspiration.

As the mode of quotation now referred to, has been much insisted upon by those who have rejected the common doctrine of inspiration and has sometimes been strenuously urged as a conclusive argument against Christianity itself; it must be allowed to deserve a very particular consideration.

All which I can now do, will be, to lay before you the principles on which the difficulty may be solved, and to adduce a sufficient number of quotations to illustrate those principles.

With regard to those passages in the New Testament, in which *real predictions* are quoted from the Old, there can be no difficulty. The quotations may not be made in the exact language of the prophets; and they may be cited in one place in a manner somewhat different from what they are in another. All that can be required is, that the writer should distinctly show what passage he means to quote as a prediction. It can be of no consequence, whether he does this by citing the whole passage exactly; or by

citing exactly such a part of it, as will satisfy us to what prediction he refers; or by giving the substance of the passage in other words; or by merely referring to the place, where the prediction is found. All these methods of citation or reference, are in good use; and either of them may be employed without any mistake or impropriety. It is frequently a matter of great convenience, both in speaking and writing, and a means too of making the most favorable impression, to quote *in the most summary way*. To make out a quotation fully, and in the very words of the original author, is often not only unnecessary, but disadvantageous. These remarks are specially applicable to predictions which were regarded as uncommonly important, and which were of course familiar to those, for whose sake they were cited in the New Testament.

Without entering here on the inquiry, which of the particular passages quoted in the New Testament as being fulfilled, are *real predictions;* I will just remark, that predictions may be contained in many passages in the Old Testament, which are in some respects involved in great perplexity and obscurity. The books of the Old Testament were written in a distant period of time, and in a language which has long since ceased to be used by any nation or society of men. They were written too in circumstances which can be but very imperfectly known to us. Besides this, the authors of the Old Testament, particularly of those parts which contain prophecy, wrote in a manner exceedingly diverse from anything which is common among us. They frequently pass from one subject to another with great abruptness, and without giving the least notice of the transition. This, however contrary to common usage at the present time, must be considered as having been perfectly natural, in that state of mental excitement to which the inspired writers were raised. Who can suppose that a mind, elevated by divine influence, like the mind of Isaiah, or the mind of David in some of the Psalms, could, in its movements, have been subject to the same rules of rhetoric or logic, as the minds of literary men at this day? We are then to be very cautious in concluding, that a passage in the Old Testament was not intended to be understood as a prophecy, because it is attended

with obscurity, or because it is not introduced as a prophecy, formally and distinctly, or because it stands closely connected with what relates to different subjects. Nor are we to conclude, that a passage in the Old Testament is not a real prediction, because its accomplishment is nowhere mentioned, either in those Scriptures which were subsequently written, or in any other history to which we have access. The history of such accomplishment may be brought to light at some future time; or it may have been lost beyond recovery. But surely our ignorance, however occasioned, can make no difference as to the truth or the signification of God's word, or the occurrence of events corresponding with it. Before attempting to judge on this point, we ought to attend carefully to the remarks above made; and we ought above all to be sure, that we have a familiar acquaintance with the mode of writing which was in use among the Hebrews, especially with the peculiarities of their prophetic style, and also with the whole compass of events in divine providence which stand related to prophecy. While we have but an imperfect acquaintance with these important branches of sacred science, we are not to be surprised, if we find ourselves perplexed with the difficulties of the subject now under consideration.

To the inquiry, *which of the texts quoted in the New Testament are to be considered as predictions*, my general reply is, that we must determine this very much as we determine the meaning of any other passages of Scripture; that is, by applying the proper rules of interpretation. The first step is, *to examine the text as it stands in the Old Testament*, and see whether there is anything in the text itself, or in the context, which shows it to be a prediction. We must inquire, on what subject the writer is speaking; whether it appears to be his object to foretell future events; and whether, taking the passage by itself, or in connection with the context, we can reasonably think, that the writer, or the Spirit that inspired him, intended to point out the particular event, to which the text is applied in the quotation. When a thorough examination of the place satisfies us that the text quoted was meant to be a prediction, we come to the quotation in the New

Testament prepared to believe, that the writer designedly introduces it as a prediction of the event to which he applies it; not merely because it is introduced by any of the common formulas, but because there is evidence that the passage quoted, was originally meant to be a prediction. As a plain example of this, I might mention Isa. 53, which cannot, without violence, be understood as relating to any one but the Messiah.

But suppose, that after the most careful examination, we are still in suspense, whether the original writer of a passage, quoted in the New Testament, meant it as a prediction; we are then to inquire, whether any satisfaction can be had from the writer who makes the quotation. In this way we may, in some instances, become entirely satisfied respecting the meaning and application of texts in the Old Testament, concerning which, considered merely as they stand there, we should find ourselves in a state of uncertainty. To show the proper mode of investigation in such a case, I would refer you to Psalm 16: 10. We first examine this in its place, as written by David. In this Psalm we find a variety of devout sentiments, which are much like what David and other writers of the Psalms expressed in other cases, and which might all be very properly expressed by devout men, as their own sentiments, in any age, — except v. 10. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Concerning the sense of this, our minds would probably be in doubt; though, taking it in connection with the drift of the Psalm, we might be inclined to think it to be in some way applicable to David, and so be led to seek after a meaning that would correspond with this view. We might adopt a construction as far from sober truth, as that of Rosenmüller; who, applying the passage wholly to David, seems yet unwilling to allow, that David intended so much as to express a hope of happiness in another state, because he thinks David had no knowledge of the immortality of the soul, and supposes he intended merely to say, *that he should not die yet, but that God would grant him still a long continuance of the present life.* Finding ourselves in a state of uncertainty respecting this text, we turn to Acts 2: 25—31;

where Peter entered into a particular consideration of it, and showed that it could not relate to David, inasmuch as he had been long dead and buried. Peter's conclusion was, that David, "*being a prophet, foretold the resurrection of Christ.*" In Acts 13: 35 — 37, Paul treated the subject in a similar way: "*David fell on sleep, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised again, saw no corruption.*" Now, as we have entire confidence in the judgment of these apostles, we dismiss our doubts, and rest in the conviction that David, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, actually wrote *a real prediction of the resurrection of Christ.*

But it sometimes happens, that after examining all the circumstances of a passage in the Old Testament, we think we have satisfactorily ascertained its meaning; and yet, on examining the place where it is quoted, we perceive that an evangelist or an apostle gives it a different sense; and, what is more, builds his reasoning upon the assumption, that the original passage had the sense which he gives it. When such a case occurs, if we would maintain the authority of the Christian religion, we must give up the opinion we had before formed, and adopt a different one; and all this, because it is our duty to sit at the feet of one, endued with higher intelligence than ours, and, with implicit confidence, to receive his instructions as to the meaning of the Holy Scriptures.

An example in point may be taken from Heb. 1. With respect to the text quoted, ver. 8, we might not be able to determine, that it was certainly intended by the Psalmist to respect the Messiah; though the context would favor such a conclusion. But when we come to vs. 10, 11, 12, and turn to Psalm 102: 25 — 27, from which the quotation is made, we ask, what there is in this passage as it stands in the Psalm, or in what precedes or follows it, which could lead us to think, that it was meant to be addressed to the Son of God. What could we find here more than in any other place containing an address to God, which could justify us in applying the passage to the Messiah? And yet the writer to the Hebrews not only applies it to him, but founds his argument on the assumption, that this text and the others here cited, were

originally intended to be applied to him. Now, believing as we do, that the writer to the Hebrews was divinely inspired, his decision on this point requires us to give up our previous opinion, and to understand the passage as applying to Christ.

In every such case as this, the divine inspiration of the New Testament writers becomes a fundamental principle in the interpretation of Scripture. Those, who deny their inspiration, will, of course, adhere to the opinion which was formed by a regard merely to the passage in the Old Testament, thus virtually imputing to the writer who makes the quotation, a misapprehension of the true sense of the passage quoted.

Some cases may occur, in which we cannot fully satisfy ourselves, either from the Old Testament or the New, whether the passage quoted was meant to be a prediction or not. But why should a difficulty of this kind perplex us? It is implied in 1 Pet. 1: 10—12, and in Daniel 12: 8, that the prophets themselves did not always understand the full import of what God suggested to their own minds; at least, that they were, in some instances, unable to apprehend the time and circumstances of the events which were, in a general way, revealed; for they are represented by Peter as making diligent search after a further knowledge of what the "Spirit which was in them did signify;" and what God communicated to Daniel, was communicated in terms so obscure and enigmatical, that he said, "I heard, but I *understood not.*" It is moreover manifest from the repetition of terms equally mysterious, ver. 11, 12, as well as from the answer given to Daniel, ver. 9, that God did not intend he should have a perfect understanding of the communication which had been made to him. Now, if in some cases, the prophets themselves could not readily understand what was suggested to their own minds by the divine Spirit; we cannot think it strange, if we are sometimes in doubt as to the meaning of what they wrote.

But it is said, that many passages are apparently quoted, as predictions actually fulfilled under the Christian dispensation, which we can by no means regard as predictions. Collins, with deep hostility against the whole system of Christianity, artfully

endeavors, by an argument derived from these quotations, to undermine the authority of the Christian Scriptures. The design of his book on the grounds of the Christian religion, is to show, that the first publishers of the gospel laid the whole support of the Christian religion on pretended Jewish prophecies, applied in a sense entirely contrary to their plain, original meaning; and accordingly, that the grand argument in favor of Christianity is destitute of force.

In regard to this point I remark, first, that the manner of quoting now referred to, does not certainly imply that the passage quoted *is a prediction*, or that it was *regarded as such* by the writer who quotes it. The phrase, ἵνα πληρωθῇ, "that it might be fulfilled," and other phrases of the like kind, are indeed used, and very properly, to introduce a real prediction which is accomplished, — but not for this purpose only. They are often used, and with equal propriety, to denote *a mere comparison of similar events* — to signify *that the thing spoken of answers to the words of a prophet*, or *that his words may justly be applied to it.* Accordingly, we might in many instances take a passage, where it is said, such a thing was done *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet*, or that what was spoken by the prophet *was fulfilled*, and might express the same thing by saying, *the declaration of the prophet had an accomplishment in what took place; or, his words may be aptly applied to it, or they very well express it; or, his observation is true in reference to the present case; or, this thing is like what the prophet describes.*

It is plain in respect to many passages quoted from the Old Testament, that ἵνα πληρωθῇ, οὕτως γέγραπται, and other similar phrases, are not intended to indicate predictions. In the cases referred to, there is nothing apparent in the form or design of the passages themselves, or in their contexts in the Old Testament, which furnishes the least reason for regarding them as predictions. On the contrary, all the circumstances which can aid us in understanding the original writers, lead us to conclude, that they had no intention to write predictions. Nor is there anything apparent in *the object or the manner* of the quotations, which shows them to be pre-

dictions. Those who quote them, express as important a sense, and express it as forcibly, or if their object is to support any truth by reasoning, they reason as clearly and conclusively, on supposition that the passages are not quoted as predictions, as on supposition they are.

Furthermore; there is nothing in the formulas themselves, which furnishes any conclusive reason for considering the texts quoted as predictions. As to the conjunction ἵνα, though it more commonly signifies the *final cause* or *end*, it is often used to denote *the event merely*. According to this sense, ἵνα πληρωθῇ does not signify, *that it might be fulfilled*, as though the fulfilment was the end of what was done; but, *thus a saying of the prophet was fulfilled*, or *it so came to pass that it was fulfilled*, agreeing with the other formula, τότε ἐπληρώθη τὸ ῥηθέν, *then was fulfilled what was spoken*. The verb ἐπληρώθη has nothing in its meaning which applies exclusively to a prediction. Even when applied to a prediction, its meaning is that the prediction was *accomplished*, or *carried into effect*. But surely other things written in the Old Testament, as promises, threats, and the declaration of any divine truths, may be said to be *accomplished*, or *carried into effect*, as well as *predictions*. It agrees perfectly with the usage of the inspired writers, and with common practice, to employ the language now under consideration, *when anything is done, which corresponds with what was before said*. Instances of the same way of speaking may be found among heathen writers. Thus in Ælian; "Diogenes Sinopensis used continually to say of himself, that he *fulfilled* and underwent the *curses of tragedy*." See Sykes' Essay on the Christian Religion, ch. 13.

Finally; no proof that a passage quoted is a real prediction, can be derived from its being called a *prophecy*, or from its being attributed to a *prophet*. The word *prophet*, as well as *prophecy*, is used with great latitude of signification. *Prophet* signifies not only one who foretells future events, but any inspired teacher or interpreter of the divine will. Sometimes it signifies *any writer of the books of the Old Testament*. And prophecy denotes not only *a prediction*, but *any admonition or other instruction delivered by an inspired messenger*.

We see then how the matter stands. To the inspiration of the writers of the New Testament it is objected, that they quote, as predictions, texts which are not predictions. But as to a great number of the texts cited, there is no evidence that the writers who quoted them, regarded them as predictions. On the contrary, there is satisfactory evidence that "they were wont to say, a passage of Scripture was fulfilled, as often as anything happened to which they could apply it; and that they intended no more, than that a certain thing happened, of which one might say what a prophet said on another occasion." As there is the clearest evidence that such a manner of quotation was common among the Jews, and that a manner very similar has prevailed among others; and as this manner of quotation is found by experience to be one of the best means of illustrating important doctrines and facts; it is as far as possible from furnishing any objection against the inspiration of those who wrote the New Testament.

You might as well object to their inspiration, because they employed the language then in use. If men are led by the Holy Spirit to give instruction, they will doubtless do it in the most suitable manner. And the most suitable manner is that which experience has proved to be convenient, and practice has made common, — that in which we employ the forms of speech, the figures, the modes of reasoning and illustration, which others around us employ, and which are likely to convey our meaning clearly and impress it deeply.

It is the frequent practice of writers, to make quotations from previous writers, for the purpose of giving a varied and more impressive illustration of what they would teach. If there is any book which is held in high repute, on account of its antiquity, the name of its author, or the excellence of its contents; from such a book quotations are likely to be made. And they are made, not merely to prove a doctrine which is doubted or denied, but to give additional force to truths commonly received, and to obligations commonly acknowledged. By means of such quotations, the particular truths affirmed become associated with circumstances, which impart to them a higher interest and authority.

These remarks are specially applicable to the writers of the New Testament with regard to their practice of quoting from the Old. All the circumstances, which can ever be supposed to influence writers to quote freely from others, were combined in their case. They held the Scriptures of the Old Testament in the highest reverence. They were taught by the prophets, and by Christ himself, to regard those Scriptures as of divine authority, and as the basis of all true religion. What stronger reason could they have for making continual citations from their sacred books?

Another circumstance which must naturally have influenced them to quote abundantly from the Old Testament, was, that they had so few books besides. And this is connected with another circumstance, namely, that they were in the habit of consulting their sacred books so constantly, and with such earnest and devout attention, that they became very intimately acquainted with them. The historical facts, the doctrines, precepts, promises, threats, and the language in which all these were conveyed; — the metaphors, similes, allegories, types, and all the peculiarities of style, found in the Scriptures, were familiar to the writers of the New Testament. They imbibed not only the general spirit of their sacred books, but the mode of speaking and thinking there exhibited. Whenever they undertook to treat any subject, they seemed immediately to recur to passages in the Old Testament, which either treated the same subject, or would supply some useful illustration of it. In many instances, they employed the language of the Scriptures, *as their own;* it being perfectly familiar to them, and better suited to their purpose than any other.

And do not *we* proceed in the same manner? And is not the practice so familiar, that we often do it insensibly? In common discourse, in prayer, and in the more formal statement of divine truth, we frequently use the language of Scripture, either in the way of exact quotation, or by taking part of a passage, or part of several passages, as the case requires. And Christians do this very much in proportion to the reverence they feel for the Bible, and the diligence with which they study it. Take such authors as Owen, Watts, John Newton, and Edwards, and see how consider-

able a proportion of their writings consists of partial or entire quotations from Scripture, or allusions to it.

Thus it appears, that the writers of the New Testament do what is justifiable in itself, and consistent with common practice, not only in making quotations from Scripture, but in *the design* and *manner* of making them. I shall insist more particularly on this point, as it is here the chief difficulty lies.

What then is the design of those quotations in the New Testament, where it is evident that no prediction is concerned? I answer, it is *the enforcement or illustration of some important truth. A quotation manifestly answers such a design, if the words are suited to express the thing intended, though used originally for another purpose; and especially if the general principle involved in the original use, was the same as that which is involved in the quotation.* The quotation answers the design most remarkably, when suitableness of words and sameness of principle are combined. As an example of this, take the quotation in Matt. 2: 15, from the Prophet Hosea, 11: 1,—"Out of Egypt have I called my Son." In the first place, these words are perfectly suited to express the fact to which they are applied by the Evangelist. Jesus *was the Son of God, and was by divine direction brought up out of Egypt.* This suitableness of the words would alone be sufficient to evince the propriety of the quotation, although the words, as used by the prophet, had nothing of the nature of a *prediction*, being a plain statement of a fact which had long before taken place. Keep in mind, too, that the thing denoted by *Son* in Matthew, was very different from what was denoted by the same word in Hosea. The evangelist referred to the *Saviour;* the prophet to the *Israelitish nation.* Each of these was, indeed, called, "*Son of God,*" though for very different reasons. Again; the *event* which was denoted by God's *calling* his Son out of Egypt, was different in the last case, from what it was in the former; and yet the two events were, with perfect propriety, expressed by the same words.

But there was something more than suitableness in the words. *The principle of divine government* was in both cases the same.

In bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt, God showed his kindness to them; his care to protect and deliver them, and his faithfulness in executing his promise. In the event described by the evangelist, he showed the same kindness and care and faithfulness in respect to Jesus Christ.

Take Heb. 12: 6. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth;" — quoted from Prov. 3: 12. The propriety of the quotation depends upon this one point, that the principle of the divine conduct, expressed in the text, was the same in the Apostle's time, as in Solomon's. Heb. 12: 12. "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, etc." Here the quotation was made with propriety, because those to whom the writer to the Hebrews referred, were, in some important respects, like those referred to by the prophet; and therefore needed the same encouragement.

In Matt. 2: 17, 18, another instance occurs of a quotation made for the purpose of illustration merely. To set forth the great distress which prevailed, when Herod destroyed the children, the evangelist quotes a passage from Jeremiah. "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the Prophet, saying, 'In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.'" In this case, the words, which described the distress formerly occasioned in Rama by the captivity of Ephraim and Manasseh, are made use of to describe the distress occasioned in Bethlehem by the slaughter of the infants. In both cases there was *great mourning*. And Matthew, being familiarly acquainted with the impressive language used by the prophet in reference to the former calamity, was naturally led to use it, as descriptive of the latter. And certainly no language could have been better suited to make a just impression of the alarm and grief, occasioned by the cruelty of Herod; especially when it is considered, that the language of the prophet not only described, in glowing colors, the grief which prevailed in Bethlehem, but would be associated in the minds of those for whom Matthew wrote, with the remembrance of former calamities, and so become still more impressive.

There is no passage quoted so frequently by the writers of the New Testament, as that from Isaiah vi. where God said to the Prophet: "Go and tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." The character of the people in the time of Isaiah, and the course of divine providence towards them, were described truly in these words. The character of the people in Christ's time, and afterwards, was generally the same as in the prophet's time, and the conduct of God towards them was the same. Accordingly, the New Testament writers often described that character of the people, and that conduct of divine providence, as they appeared in Christ's time, in the language of the prophet. They said, what was spoken by the prophet was *fulfilled* in incorrigible sinners in their day. And *we* say it is fulfilled in incorrigible sinners in *our* day.

The same must be said of the quotation from Isa. 29: 13, in Matt. 15: 7, 8, 9. The men of Christ's time were of the same hypocritical character, as those who were contemporary with Isaiah. It was therefore perfectly proper to describe them in the same language. "Well did Esaias prophesy of you, *this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*"

This practice of quoting from the Old Testament for the general purpose of illustration, is not only proper in itself, but is, as I have already remarked, perfectly conformed to *common practice.* What is more common at the present day, than to illustrate the truths and duties of religion, by a familiar citation of texts from the Scriptures? When the case seems to require it, we quote a particular passage exactly, naming the book, chapter, and verse. In other cases, we quote the substance and general sense of a passage in a condensed form, without following the exact words of Scripture. And sometimes we make an intelligible allusion to a part of Scripture which is well understood, without actually quoting either the words, or the sense. Thus, we say, such a

view of a subject is according to what Christ taught his disciples of the character of those who are blessed; or, according to the direction he gave respecting the treatment of a brother who offends; or, according to the final commission he gave his apostles; or, according to Paul's account of justification by faith. Or we say, that Paul's account of the strife between the flesh and the spirit applies to the case of every believer, — taking it for granted that every one recollects the passage alluded to.

It is very common for us to apply texts of Scripture in a manner more or less different from that in which they were originally applied. If the texts quoted are well adapted to the particular truth which we would illustrate by them, or if they are suited to express the general truth, originally expressed, in the particular form now intended, we deem it sufficient. For example. In our confessions to God, we use the words of David, in the fifty-first Psalm; — "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." David made this confession to God on a particular occasion, and with reference to a particular sin, which was, in a peculiar sense, committed against God. But as every sin is committed against God, and as it is this opposition to God which is the highest aggravation of sin; we consider it proper to confess our sins in the words of David. We borrow the language of Scripture, also, when we speak of offering up our *evening sacrifice.* As sacrifice was formerly one mode of religious worship, and indeed an essential part of it, and as the language which was used in relation to it, is invested with a high degree of sacredness; we consider it suitable to use the same language to represent religious worship at the present day. In such cases, we quote sentences, or parts of sentences, from the Old Testament, for the purpose of expressing something very different, in some respects, from that to which they were originally applied. In the same manner, the language which described the temple worship, the residence of God in the sanctuary, the sacred fire, the incense, etc., is familiarly borrowed by Christians to express the different parts of their religious services. And we might very properly say, in a time of earnest attention to religion, that is *fulfilled* which was

spoken by Wisdom in the Proverbs: "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching at my gates, and waiting at the posts of my doors." And if we would describe the happiness which Christians enjoy in the work of religion, we might properly say, that Scripture is *fulfilled*, which declares: "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."

I might illustrate the propriety of this manner of making quotations, by a reference to our practice in regard to the Classics. If we would show that we think it necessary to guard very watchfully against an enemy, especially when he proffers kindness, we make a quotation from Virgil, and say; *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes, I fear the Greeks, even when they offer presents.* If we would say that a man, while endeavoring to avoid one danger, falls or is likely to fall into another, we quote a Latin proverb; *Incidit in Scyllam, qui vult vitare Charybdim — he who would escape Charybdis, falls into Scylla.* If we would express, rather contemptuously, our disbelief of anything advanced by others, we quote a phrase from Horace; *Credat Judæus Apella.* — Such citations might properly enough be introduced by a phraseology similar to what is used by the writers of the New Testament. We might say, this is a *fulfilment* of what was said by the poet; or it is *as the poet says.*

But Matthew quotes a sentence from the Old Testament, which is not found there. Matt. 2: 23, "And Jesus came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets, — *He shall be called a Nazarene.*" As no such passage is found in the prophets, the quotation has been supposed to be a proof that Matthew made a mistake, and of course that he was not under the infallible guidance of the Spirit. But such a supposition is without any sufficient grounds. Indeed, this passage furnishes a happy illustration of the principle on which quotations are frequently made. In the time of our Saviour, Nazareth, and those who dwelt there, were held in general contempt; as appears from John 1: 46. 7: 52. To be called a Nazarene, was therefore to be disgraced — to be represented as base and despicable. It is admitted that no prophet used the par-

ticular expression concerning Christ, which is found in Matthew. In *their* day, it might have been no mark of reproach; so that, had they used the phrase, it might not have conveyed the meaning intended by Matthew. But did they not in various ways foretell, that the Messiah should be *despised?*—that he should be reproached, as base and contemptible? And was not this the same, as was afterwards signified, by his being called a *Nazarene?* His having lived for a time with his indigent parents, in so despised a place as Nazareth, and thus coming to bear the name of a *Nazarene*, was an accomplishment of the various predictions representing the reproach and contempt which were to fall upon him? The Evangelist then refers to a *real prediction;* a prediction not expressly contained in any one place, but gathered from various places; a prediction taken, not from *the exact words*, but from *the sense* of the prophets.

The writers of the New Testament have been charged with quoting not only imperfectly, but incorrectly. As, 2 Cor. 6: 18, "And I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." No passage, *exactly* like this, is found in any part of the Old Testament. The one which is the nearest is 2 Sam. 7: 14, where God says to David respecting Solomon, "I will be *his* father and he shall be *my* son." If this is the passage cited, the third person is changed into the second,—and the *singular* number into the *plural*,—and *daughters* is added. Thus what was in fact said of Solomon, is now applied to Christians. This manner of quotation is perfectly just, as the same paternal love and faithfulness, which had been exercised in the case of Solomon, was and is exercised towards Christians. Accordingly, the consoling truth, which the Apostle meant to declare to believers was this;—*The unchangeable God, who promised that he would be a Father to Solomon, and would make him his son, will show the same favor to you; and if you are obedient, he, in effect, says to you, "I will be your Father, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters."*

On the same principle, the Apostle says to the Hebrew Christians;—"Be content with such things as ye have; for God hath

said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" God said this originally to *Joshua*, to encourage him to go forward boldly to the arduous work which had been assigned him. And every believer, in all his duties and trials, may rely upon the same gracious presence of God, as was promised to Joshua.

In this way we see how suitable it was for the Apostle to quote several passages, or parts of passages, from different parts of the Old Testament, as he does 2 Cor. 6: 16, 17. "For ye are the temple of God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them. Wherefore come out, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you." The first part of this quotation is from Leviticus 26: 11, 12, with the change of person from the second to the third. The rest is doubtless taken from Is. 52: 11, "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out from the midst of her; be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." The Apostle quotes the *sense* in a *similar phraseology*, but in a very abridged form, and with the entire omission of the clause appropriate to the priests. Thus what was, in different places, spoken of the Israelites, is quoted as applicable to the Christians at Corinth. The whole quotation is obviously just, because God required of the Corinthians the same separation from the wicked world, and the same watchful purity, as he did of the Israelites, and even of the priests; and because he would bestow upon his people at Corinth in the Apostle's days, the same blessings as he had bestowed upon his people in former days.

No command or promise, either of the Old Testament or the New, was particularly addressed by the writers to any individual now living. But we hesitate not to declare to saints and to sinners, thus saith the Lord to *you*, citing Scripture commands and promises as now applicable to their case, and as coming directly from God to them; except where change of circumstances forbids the application of the same principle. And we consider no variation in the form of citing Scripture of any consequence, provided the *sense* is faithfully given. Thus we say to sinners, the Lord Jesus addresses to you those gracious words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and

are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." But circumstances do not always require us to recite the passage entire. We allow ourselves to quote more or less completely, and in different forms, just as may appear most convenient and proper. Thus; Christ says, *Come unto me, heavy laden sinners, and I will give you rest.* Or, *Christ invites you to come to him with all your burdens, to learn of him, and obey his easy commands, and encourages you to do this by the promise of spiritual rest.*

The result of the whole is this. If the practice of making quotations in the manner above described, is of important use, and is regarded with universal approbation in other men; why should it be thought exceptionable in the writers of the New Testament? And why should the use of it be deemed inconsistent with their inspiration? Would not the presumption rather be, that the Spirit of God would lead those who were under his influence, to avail themselves of a mode of writing, which is so highly impressive and useful? And as this mode of writing was, in an uncommon degree, suited to the taste of those who first received the books of the New Testament, and so was adapted, in an uncommon degree, to be useful to them; would it not be reasonable to think, that the authors of those books, if favored with divine guidance, would make a free use of it? We conclude then, that quoting from the Old Testament in the manner and for the purposes described, is an argument in favor of the inspiration of the Apostles, rather than an objection against it.

LECTURE XI.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

I HAVE thought it expedient in regard to the docrine of Inspiration, as well as some other subjects, instead of first establishing the main doctrines and then obviating objections, to labor first to clear away objections and difficulties, and then to exhibit arguments in support of the doctrine. In the common method, the arguments are exhibited while the mind is perplexed with difficulties, and consequently may fail of producing their proper effect. In the other method, the mind is first led to see that the usual objections are not valid, and being thus freed from their influence, is likely to receive a more just impression from the evidence which is offered to prove the doctrine.

The doubts and perplexities and diversities of opinion, which exist in relation to the subject now before us, are doubtless owing, in a considerable degree, to the neglect of the cautions which I have suggested, and to the influence of the misapprehensions which I have endeavored to correct. And we shall all be exposed to similar doubts and perplexities, if we are not careful to attend to these cautions, and to guard against these misapprehensions. For if we admit that the writers of Scripture could not have been inspired, unless we know the particular manner in which they were affected by inspiration; or that they could have enjoyed no divine influence, except in the revelation of new truths; or if we admit that they could not have been inspired, if in writing the Scriptures they made a free use of their own faculties, or wrote in human language, and used the varieties of style common in other writings, or made quotations in any way except in the very words of the ori-

ginal writers, for the very purpose which they had in view; or if we admit that they could not have been inspired, if their writings contained things which appear in themselves to be of small consequence, or things which for a time are not clearly understood, or if the present copies of their writings contain any real or apparent contradictions, or any instances of incorrectness;—if we admit all or any of these assumptions, and suffer them to influence our judgment; the consequence will be, that all which the Scriptures themselves say on the subject, will go for nothing, and that we shall come in the end to doubt or deny the doctrine of Inspiration.

We now proceed to a particular consideration of what the Scriptures teach concerning this momentous subject.

The inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures will be first considered.

The prophets generally professed to speak *the word of God.* What they taught was introduced and confirmed by a "thus saith the Lord," or, "the Lord spake to me saying." And, in one way or another, they gave clear proof, that they were divinely commissioned, and spoke in the name of God, or, as it is expressed in the New Testament, that *God spake by them.*

But the strongest and most satisfactory proof of the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament writings, is found in the testimony of Christ and the apostles.

I shall, *first*, argue from *the passages which directly assert the fact of inspiration.*

One of these passages is, 2 Pet. 1: 21: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The writer had just before spoken of the evidence which he and his fellow disciples had of the divine mission and glory of Christ, from what they saw of his majesty in the holy mount, and from the voice which they there heard from heaven, declaring him to be the Son of God. But clear as that evidence was, he represents the evidence arising from prophecy to be still clearer. "We have also," he says, "a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light shining in a dark place." And then, to recommend prophecy as a sure means of discovering the character

of Christ, and to show that it may be safely relied upon, he adds: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Prophecy, in this place, has evidently a very extensive meaning, including all the representations of the Messiah contained in the Old Testament. Some learned commentators have denied that any real predictions of Christ can be found in the Old Testament. But if we have confidence in the knowledge and veracity of Christ and his apostles, we shall be satisfied that the Scriptures of the Old Testament contain many predictions and other representations of Christ, — even more than Christians generally suppose. The text, Luke 24: 27, clearly shows how Christ regarded this subject. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded to them in *all the Scriptures* the things concerning himself. There was then something of the nature of prophetic representation respecting the Messiah, in *Moses* and *all the prophets*, and in *all the Scriptures*. Verse 44 of the same chapter is of similar import: "And Jesus said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written concerning me, in *the law of Moses*, and in *the prophets*, and in *the Psalms*." Now it was of prophecy, understood in this extensive sense, that Peter said, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

We are not, however, to suppose that Peter's thus attributing inspiration to this part of the Scriptures, implies that other parts are not equally inspired. He attributed inspiration particularly to prophecy, because he then had occasion to speak of it, and he wished to show in what estimation it was worthy to be held, and how perfectly it was suited to answer the end for which he exhorted Christians to use it. Whenever he had occasion to refer to other parts of Scripture, he showed the same respect for them, and represented them as of equal authority with prophecy.

Another passage which *directly asserts the fact of divine inspiration*, is 2 Tim. 3: 16. "*All Scripture* is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction

for instruction in righteousness." Here, as in 2 Pet. 1: 21, the inspiration of the Scriptures is spoken of as an important practical subject. It is connected with their being profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction, and their being able to make men wise unto salvation, and to furnish them thoroughly for every good work.

Some writers think that the passage should be rendered thus; *all divinely inspired Scripture*, or *all Scripture, being divinely inspired, is profitable.* According to the common rendering, inspiration is predicated of all Scripture. According to the other, it is presupposed, as the attribute of the subject. But this rendering is liable to insuperable objections. For θεόπνευστος and ὠφέλιμος are connected by the conjunction καὶ, and must both be predicates, if either of them is. And unless one of them is a predicate, there is no complete sentence. Henderson remarks, that the mode of construction referred to "is at variance with a common rule of Greek syntax, which requires, that when two adjectives are closely joined, as θεόπνευστος and ὠφέλιμος here are, if there be an ellipsis of the substantive verb ἔστι, this verb must be supplied after the former of the two, and regarded as repeated after the latter. Now there exists precisely such an ellipsis in the case before us; and as there is nothing in the context which would lead to any exception to the rule, we are bound to yield to its force." And he adds, "that the evidence in favor of the common rendering, derived from the Fathers and almost all the versions, is most decided." It cannot for a moment be admitted, that the Apostle meant to signify, that divine inspiration belongs to a part of Scripture, but not to the whole; or that he meant, as Semler supposes, to furnish a criterion by which to judge whether any work is inspired or not, namely, its *utility.* "That author proceeds fearlessly to apply this criterion to the books of the Old Testament, and to lop off eight of them, as not possessing the requisite marks of legitimacy. Most of the German divines adopt Semler's hypothesis." But it is very manifest, that such a sense is not by any means suggested by the passage itself, and that it is utterly precluded by other parts of the New Testament. For neither

Christ, nor any one of his apostles, ever intimates a distinction between some parts of Scripture, which are inspired, and other parts, which are not inspired. The doctrine which is plainly asserted in the text under consideration, and which is fully sustained by the current language of the New Testament, is, that *all the writings denominated the Scriptures, are divinely inspired.*

The two passages above quoted, cast light upon each other. Paul asserts that all Scripture is *divinely inspired.* If any one wishes to know what is meant by being *divinely inspired*, he will find an explanation in the words of Peter. To say that the Scriptures are *divinely inspired*, is the same as to say, that those who wrote them, *wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

In both of these texts, it is evidently implied, that there is an essential difference between the Holy Scriptures and all other writings, as to their *origin*, or *the manner in which they were first produced.* Other writings come by the will of man; they originate in voluntary human efforts. Human genius and labor are sufficient to produce them. They are to be referred solely to man in the exercise of his natural powers. But this is not the case with the Scriptures. It is not sufficient to say, the writers were honest and intelligent men, and wrote what they knew or believed to be true. This may be said of many other writings. But who would think it proper to affirm, that those other writings came not by the will of man, or that they were given by inspiration of God? Who would put the high distinction upon them, that the authors wrote *as they were impelled by the Holy Ghost?* It must then be manifest, that he who undertakes to account for the Old Testament Scriptures by alleging, that the writers had a sound understanding and the best means of information; that they were men of unimpeachable integrity; that they were diligent in their labors, and watchful against mistakes; and that they wrote on subjects on which they had a competent knowledge,—leaving out the grand fact, that the sacred penmen *wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, and that *their writings were divinely inspired*, — entirely sets aside the meaning of what both Paul and Peter assert, and overlooks the chief characteristic which distinguished the Scriptures from all other writings.

But there are other representations in the New Testament, which confirm the argument above stated.

To every intelligent reader of the New Testament, it must have occurred as a remarkable fact, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament are frequently called *the word of God.* In this designation Christ and his apostles agree with the prophets. Now, in what sense did the writers of the New Testament use the phrase, *the word of God*, when they applied it to designate their Scriptures? They used it, evidently, to distinguish the Scriptures from the traditions of men, and from all writings of human origin, and to signify that God had invested these books with divine authority. And if we take into view the representation before mentioned, we shall perceive that, when the apostles called the Scriptures *the word of God*, they had reference to their *inspiration.* These sacred books are not denominated the *word of God*, because they contain instruction respecting God and divine things, nor because the instruction they contain is true. For if any writings not inspired, either treatises on the attributes of God or on the duties of man, or histories of the events of divine providence, should be perfectly free from error; they would not, on that account, be *the word of God.* Is every truth which a man speaks, the word of God? When the apostles called the Scriptures the word of God, they doubtless had their eye upon their *divine original*, and meant to imply, that they were written under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit, and so were stamped with divine authority.

I would here remark, that although different parts of Scripture were given in different ways, so far as human agency was concerned, we are not taught that there is any difference in regard to the *reality of inspiration.* Those parts which contain direct communications from God relating to future events, or relating to any doctrines before unknown, are nowhere distinguished, in respect of divine inspiration or divine authority, from those parts which relate to things before known.

My next argument to prove the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures is, *that Christ and his apostles treat them as*

possessing an authority entirely different from that of any other writings.

The books, called the *Scriptures*, were constantly appealed to by the authors of the New Testament, as having supreme authority on all questions of doctrine and duty. Neither Christ nor the apostles ever speak of any book or sentence of the Old Testament in a manner which implies, that they regarded it as a human production. They represent that disobedience to any part of it is disobedience to God, and that contempt of any part of it is contempt of the divine authority.

The following examples show the manner in which Christ and the apostles refer to particular parts of the Old Testament. You will see that, to whatever part they refer, they treat it as possessing the same divine authority.

Matt. 19: 4—6. In answer to the question of the Pharisees, on the subject of divorce, Christ appealed to the particular account which Moses gave of the creation, as of decisive authority. "Have ye not read, (i. e. in the Scriptures, Gen. ii,) that he who made them in the beginning, made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife?" Paul shows, Rom. 4: 3, that he regarded what was said of Abraham, (Gen. 15: 6,) as of divine authority. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." He refers to this passage as decisive evidence of his doctrine. In verse 6, he refers in the same manner to what David said, Psalm 32: 1; "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." Again, verse 17, he quotes what is said of Abraham in Genesis; "*As it is written*, I have made thee a father of many nations." In John 10: 34, 35, we see what stress was laid on a particular expression in the Old Testament. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, *I said* ye are gods? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and *the Scripture cannot be broken*," etc., implying, that the particular declaration quoted from Psalm 82, though it might seem to be of

no special consequence, was yet of divine authority, and could not be invalidated. 1 Cor. 15: 27, is another example of the stress which is laid on a particular text. The quotation is from Psalm viii. "He hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, all things are put under him," etc. The Apostle understood the passage as relating to Christ, and reasons from it as having an authority which could belong to no human production. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews attaches the same importance to other expressions found in the same Psalm.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied. It is obvious that whenever Christ or the apostles had occasion to refer to any passage, whether longer or shorter, in the Old Testament, they refer to it as being the *word of God*, and as possessing divine authority. Sometimes they refer in general terms to the Scriptures, taken together, and represent them all as divine. At other times, they represent particular texts in the same light. They never intimate that there is any exception.

Now the Lord Jesus, was the great Prophet, the Light of the world. He possessed a fulness of divine knowledge, and came on purpose to guard men against error, and to teach them all necessary truth. He commissioned and qualified his apostles to execute the same office. Both he and they had constant occasion to speak of the Old Testament Scriptures, and to show how they regarded them, and how they would have others regard them. But they never, in a single instance, taught or said the least thing which implied, that there was any book or any text contained in the Scriptures, which was not the word of God, and which had not divine authority. And they never said anything which implied, that one part was the word of God in a lower sense, or that it had less authority, than other parts. They never gave the least intimation which was adapted to make such an impression on the minds of Christians. They never gave any caution to Christians, or to Jews, against attributing too high an authority, or attaching too much importance, to the Holy Scriptures. They were so far from this, that they made it a great object to produce among men a higher reverence for all and every part of the sacred volume,

and to excite them more diligently to search it, and more entirely to confide in it, as containing divine truth unmixed with error. Now this manner of treating the Scriptures agrees perfectly with the position, that they are *divinely inspired;* that *holy men of God spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* But it is totally contrary to the supposition, that the writing of the Scriptures is to be accounted for by means of human genius and labor, or in any way which supersedes the supernatural agency of God. For it is perfectly plain that no book, which is produced by man in the exercise of his natural powers merely, can be entitled to that kind of respect and reverence, which Christ and his apostles manifested for the sacred Scriptures, or to that unqualified confidence which they require Christians to repose in them. For an author merely human, to claim such reverence and confidence, would be arrogant and impious.

To the view of this subject which has now been exhibited, what Christian can refuse his cordial assent? It seems impossible for us to express a settled and full conviction of any truth more clearly or forcibly, than Christ and his apostles expressed their conviction of the divine origin of the sacred writings. They showed that this was their view of the Scriptures, as a whole. And whenever they had occasion for it, they showed that this was their view of particular books, and particular expressions. They well knew what reverence the generality of the Jews, especially the better part of them, felt for their sacred books. But instead of intimating that any Jews, even those who were the most subject to superstition, were in danger of carrying their reverence for the Scriptures to an extreme, and instead of doing anything to guard their minds against it, they labored in various ways to excite them to cherish a still higher reverence for the Word of God, and to render it a more constant and sincere obedience. And I must add, that if Christ and his apostles have not taught us satisfactorily that they regarded the Scriptures as given by divine inspiration, and as clothed with divine authority; we must despair of ever knowing the mind of any writer or teacher in relation to such a subject. If Christ and the apostles were free from artifice, we

know what their views were on this subject; and we know that they regarded the Scriptures in the manner which has been described. And when I find some authors, who are distinguished for learning and genius, and who profess great respect for Christianity, who yet regard the Old Testament very much as they regard any other ancient writing, and account for its production in the same way as they account for the production of other books; I am constrained to doubt whether they have yet learned the first lesson in the school of Christ.

Wilson says: "Many considerable writers on the evidences of Christianity of late, have satisfied themselves with proving its divine authority generally, and have tacitly, but most inconsistently, given up or denied the infallibility of the books in which it is recorded. They speak of authenticity, veracity, credibility, but not inspiration. Some have limited the assistance of the Spirit to the prophetical parts. Others have extended it to the doctrinal, but excluded the historical. Whilst many have lowered the whole notion of inspiration to a mere aid occasionally afforded to the sacred penmen. Thus the impression left on the minds of their readers has been, that the Bible is authentic indeed, and credible, and contains a revelation from God; but that it was indited by good and pious men only, with little more of accuracy than would belong to them as faithful historians. An intermixture of human infirmity and error is thus by no means excluded; and the Scriptures are considered as the work of fallible writers, doing their best, and entitled in all their main statements to full belief, but not under that immediate and plenary influence of the Holy Spirit, which renders all they write concerning religion, the unerring word of God."*

* Wilson on the Evidences of Christianity, Lec. 12.

LECTURE XII.

INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Our previous investigations have brought us to this conclusion, namely; that any attempt to account for the existence of the Old Testament Scriptures by the diligence and fidelity of the writers, in the use of their own talents, and the means of information within their reach, without the preternatural influence of the Holy Spirit, is altogether unsatisfactory, and falls far short of the representations which Christ and the apostles make, as to the origin of the Sacred Writings; — that they who wrote the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were under the infallible guidance of the Spirit. So far as the mind of the prophets and pious Jews on this subject is made known, it corresponds with the representations of Christ and the apostles.

Now as the Gospel dispensation is one of much higher perfection, and as it communicated more extensive miraculous endowments in a general view, than the former dispensation; it would be but reasonable to presume, that the writers of the sacred Books under this dispensation would have, at least, equal divine assistance with the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures.*

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* "The writers of the New Testament brought the same miraculous credentials of their mission with the penmen of the first Testament. If the credentials, then, of the economy of Moses, included that inspired aid by which the Old Testament was written, we may assure ourselves that the case was the same with the credentials of the economy established by the only begotten Son of the Father.

This consideration acquires greater force, when we recollect that the New Testament dispensation, surpasses the Old in all spiritual privileges and gifts. If we had no other arguments to adduce, we infer with undoubted certainty, that as the Old Testament was written under the inspiration of God, the New was composed

But our chief inquiry then is,—*what light the Books of the New Testament reflect upon the subject of their own inspiration.*

I here assume, that the writers of the New Testament are entitled to credit, so that their testimony, whatever it may be, is to be received as conclusive evidence.

The *first* thing I shall notice is, that *Christ, who had all power in heaven and earth, commissioned his apostles to act in his stead, as teachers of the Christian religion, and confirmed their authority by miracles.* By empowering them to work miracles, Christ manifestly invested them with divine authority, and gave his seal to the truth of their instructions. Their writings and their oral instructions were attested in the same way. Their miraculous works confirmed all the claims they made to be regarded as *divinely authorized teachers.*

Jesus said to his disciples, "As my father hath sent me, even so send I you." The father sent Christ to be an infallible witness to the truth. Christ sent his apostles with a commission of the same nature. They were appointed to carry on the work which he had begun, and to give all necessary instruction in regard to the Christian religion. But how could such a commission have answered the end proposed, had not those, who received it, been so assisted by the divine Spirit, as to qualify them for their work, and to render them unerring teachers? Had they not been furnished with ability to teach the way of God infallibly and perfectly, how could they have supplied to the church the place of him who was the great Prophet, the faithful and true witness?

Secondly. Christ expressly promised to give his apostles the Holy Spirit to assist them in their work.

This promise is contained in various passages, particularly the following: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, (or Assistant,) that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth." "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into *all the truth.* He shall take of mine and show

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also with the same aid, and comes commended with the same features of infallible and unerring truth."—*Wilson on the Evidences of Christianity, Lect.* 12.

it unto you." "He shall teach you *all things*, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought what or how ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Storr and Flatt think, that the words in the last verse, *For it is not ye that speak, etc.*, relate to all the instructions of the apostles, and contain the ground of the particular promise in the preceding verse. "The idea," they say, "seems to be this: The instructions which ye, my apostles, in general give, are derived not so much from yourselves, as from the Holy Spirit. Hence when ye are called on to defend your doctrines, ye need feel no anxiety, but may confidently rely on the Holy Spirit to vindicate his own doctrines by suggesting to you the very words of your defence."

Now if the promises of Christ above cited, were fulfilled; then the apostles were favored with the constant and unerring guidance of the Spirit; and so must have had a complete knowledge of the truths of the gospel, and all necessary assistance in making them known to others. If the Spirit abode with them *continually;* then, whether employed in preaching or writing, they must have been infallibly guided. What they *wrote* was to be the means of accomplishing a far more extensive good, than what they *preached.* So that if the Spirit of God deserted them when they were engaged in *writing*, he deserted them when his help was most needed, and when the want of it was likely to be most extensively injurious to the interests of religion. The effect of an error in their preaching might have been comparatively limited. But an error in their writings, which were intended for general use, would have spread a disastrous influence beyond any limits, either of time or place. If we take the promises of Christ, above quoted, in their obvious sense, we must believe that the apostles, as well as prophets, were constantly moved by the Holy Spirit in the execution of their work, and that all the Scriptures of the New Testament as well as of the Old, were divinely inspired.

The following remarks of Dr. Calamy, in his sermons on Inspiration, correspond exactly with the views already expressed.

"If the writings of the New Testament were not given by inspiration of God, our Lord was not true to his apostles; he did not answer the promise he made them as to the assistance of the Holy Spirit. If this promise of our Saviour did not refer to assistance in *writing* as well as speaking, it reached to but half their work, and left them to themselves as to the other half; which, if the concern of all succeeding ages be regarded, is the most considerable of the two. If the promise did extend to their writings, then they were under *infallible conduct.* For it is not to be supposed that such assistance as that promised for the benefit of all after ages, should leave them exposed to mistakes in their writings. The substance of the promise was, *assistance in the whole of their apostleship by the presence of his Spirit.*"

Christian writers generally agree in these views of the subject. Knapp says: "If the apostles had inspiration in discourses which were merely oral, and therefore of very temporary and limited advantage; how much more in their *writings*, which were intended to exert a more lasting and extended influence."

Thirdly; there are many passages in the New Testament which show, that *the writers considered themselves to be under the infallible guidance of the Spirit, and their instructions to be clothed with divine authority.*

It ought to be carefully kept in mind, that after the character of the apostles, as divinely authorized teachers of the Christian religion, was publicly made known by miraculous works, and was generally understood and acknowledged by the churches, it was quite unnecessary for them frequently and formally to assert their claims to that character. It is not, therefore, to be considered as anything strange or unaccountable, that what the apostles wrote on this subject, though sometimes direct and explicit, was for the most part incidental. Nor should this circumstance diminish, in our view, the evidence arising from their remarks.

Gal. 1: 11, 12; "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me, *is not after man:* For I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ."

1 Cor. 2: 10, 12, 13; "But God hath revealed them to us," (i. e. the truths pertaining to the kingdom of heaven,) "*by his Spirit.* Now we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." This last text puts the apostles upon the same footing with prophets. *The prophesy came not by the will of man; and the apostles spake not in the words which man's wisdom taught. The prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and the apostles spake in the words which the Holy Ghost taught.* This text affords as much evidence of the inspiration of the apostles, as other passages do of the inspiration of the prophets.

2 Cor. 2: 17; "We speak *as of God;*" ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ . . This indicates, that God is the *author* of what is spoken.

1 Cor. 14: 37; "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." Here then the apostle claims, that the precepts which he writes should be received as coming from God, and as clothed with divine authority; and clearly intimates that no one, who does not thus receive them, could be a true prophet, or spiritual.

The apostle says to believers at Thessalonica respecting the Gospel which he preached; "Ye received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, *the word of God.*" 1 Thess. 2: 13. In the same epistle, 4: 8, he says respecting those who treated the instructions of the apostles with contempt: "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but *God*, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit." What they spake was *the word of God*, and was to be treated as such, because he had given them his Holy Spirit. Their high authority rested on their being endued with special divine influence.

The apostle John asserts the same high claims, both for himself, and for his fellow apostles. "We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us. He that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby we know the Spirit of truth, and the Spirit of error." 1 John 4: 6.

The following texts plainly imply, that the apostles hold the same rank with prophets, and that their writings are entitled to the same respect as the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Ephes. 2: 20. Here Paul represents Christians, as "built on the foundation of the *apostles* and *prophets*," — giving to apostolic instructions the same authority as to the writings of the prophets. 2 Pet. 3: 15, 16. Peter here speaks of the epistles of Paul, as standing upon a footing with *the other Scriptures*, i. e. the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The beginning of the same chapter is of a similar import. "I write unto you that ye may be mindful of *the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour;*" thus representing the writings of the apostles as having the same authority with those of the prophets.

Other citations might be made; but these are sufficient. Now can it be supposed, that honest and humble men would have spoken thus of themselves, and represented their writings in such a light, had they not certainly known themselves to be under special divine guidance? Their manner of speaking on this subject is strikingly peculiar. They require that unlimited confidence should be placed in their instructions. They never speak of any doctrine or duty, as though they apprehended themselves to be liable to error; although in other cases they were sufficiently prompt to disclaim what did not belong to them. Whenever the principles of Christianity are concerned, they speak as men who have received a divine commission, and who act under an infallible guidance. They make a cordial reception of their instructions, and submission to their authority, essential to Christian piety. They claim the right of determining every question on the subject of religion, and they interdict and anathematize all doctrines different from theirs. Now how can it be supposed that men, who had a humble opinion of themselves, and a supreme regard to the honor of God and the cause of truth, would speak in this manner of themselves, and of their instructions, unless they believed themselves to be under a supernatural guidance, and their doctrines in all respects according to the will of God? Their manner of writing, and the

high claims they made, can be justified only on the principle, that they had been commissioned by Christ to teach in his name; that their character as his ambassadors had been confirmed by miracles; that he had promised them the continual influence of the Holy Spirit, and had faithfully fulfilled his promise in the special aid afforded them. If any one should say, it might have been without sufficient grounds that the apostles believed themselves to be thus commissioned and assisted; he would invalidate their testimony as to all other facts, and so undermine the Christian religion.

Should any one still allege that, if the writers of the New Testament were really inspired, they would have asserted their inspiration more frequently, and in more direct and positive terms; this would be my reply: If the apostles were themselves assured of their divine commission and inspiration, and had established their claims to it by evidence of the highest kind, it must have been unreasonable to expect, that they would be constantly affirming what had been so satisfactorily proved, and that in every discourse they delivered, and in every epistle they wrote, they would repeat that they had a divine commission, and were guided by the divine Spirit. Such reiteration would be not only unnecessary, but very unsuitable to the character of ambassadors from the court of heaven. Indeed, nothing like this could be expected of an ambassador from an earthly court. The apostles write like men who know that they have a well authenticated public character; that they are clothed with power from on high, and that this is understood and generally acknowledged by those Christians to whom they write. Accordingly, when they speak of their high commission, and the special divine assistance afforded them, they do not represent it as a new doctrine which it was necessary for them to publish and to prove. They speak of it sometimes for the purpose of contrasting themselves with false teachers; but, most frequently, for the sake of producing a deeper impression of the paramount importance of the doctrines and precepts which they inculcate. The circumstance, therefore, that they so seldom and so informally affirm their inspiration, instead of being inconsistent with it, is rather an argument in its favor.

As the evangelists Mark and Luke were not apostles, it must be acknowledged, that the arguments which prove the inspiration of the other books of the New Testament, do not so directly prove the inspiration of their gospels. For the purpose of aiding Christians in removing any difficulties which may arise from this circumstance, I offer the following remarks.

In the first place, *the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were not confined to the apostles.* From the Acts of the apostles it appears, that other individuals were favored with miraculous endowments. And in the first epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul speaks of many Christians who had supernatural gifts, and who were required to exercise them for the edification of the church. It was *a miraculous dispensation;* and at the commencement of that new era in the church, such a dispensation was adapted to confirm the faith of believers, and to prove to the world the divine authority of the Christian religion. Now the remarkable fact, that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit were conferred on so many besides the apostles, makes it, at least, very probable, that they were conferred on Mark and Luke. And the circumstance that these servants of Christ were so distinguished for their usefulness, and were chosen as the particular companions of the apostles, is a good reason for supposing that they were partakers of that divine influence, which was afforded so extensively and in such large measures at that period of the church.

Secondly; there was a tradition among the early Christians, that these two gospels were written under the special direction of the apostles. Tertullian says, "The gospel which Mark published may be affirmed to be Peter's, whose interpreter Mark was." He also says, that "Luke's history is usually ascribed to Paul;" meaning probably that it rested on Paul's authority. The declaration of the Fathers that Paul and Peter approved and sanctioned the gospels of Mark and Luke, is not, however, to be understood as implying, that these two evangelists were not themselves inspired. For Eusebius makes a similar declaration respecting the gospel of Matthew. He says that *Paul and Peter approved the gospel of Matthew, and confirmed the truth of it,*

as well as the gospels of Mark and of Luke. And what can be more natural than to suppose that, whenever it was necessary, one inspired writer would give his testimony to the writings of another? In this way Peter, though indirectly, confirms the authority of the epistles of Paul. 2 Pet. 3: 15, 16. On supposition that an inspired book came into the hands of any Christians who were ignorant of its divine original; an apostle, who knew the circumstances of the case, must have been ready to give the necessary information respecting that book, and to declare, that it was divinely inspired, and was to be received as part of God's word.

Finally. It is a fact which cannot be questioned, that the gospels of Mark and Luke were received as *canonical* by the primitive Christians. As those evangelists were contemporary with the apostles, and were instructed by them, the judgment of the apostles respecting their writings was undoubtedly known. Primitive Christians were exceedingly careful to inquire into the divine authority of any writings which they received as part of the sacred canon. And they evidently had far better means of getting the necessary information, and of forming a correct judgment, than we can have at this distant period. On the whole, as those early Christians, who first received the gospels of Mark and Luke, could have no motives to receive them, without good evidence of their inspiration; and as they did what they did, under the eye of the apostles, and so must have been corrected had they judged wrong; we have reason to be satisfied with their decisions, and to place the gospels of Mark and Luke on the same footing with other inspired writings.

Various objections have been urged against the inspiration of the apostles, as above exhibited. I shall attempt a particular answer to one of them, and that the most plausible, arising from several passages in Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, in which he may, at first view, appear to disclaim divine inspiration, and to speak only in his own name, and by his own authority. The passages referred to are the following. 1 Cor. 7: 10, 12, 25, 40, "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord; let not the wife depart from her husband." "But to the rest speak

I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." "Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord. Yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." "But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think I have the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 8: 8, 10; "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love." "And herein I give my advice, for this is expedient for you." 11: 17; "That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting."

Now, should we admit, as some writers do, that Paul, in these instances, intended to disclaim inspiration; we might give the answer which they give; that is, that the apostle's scrupulous care to inform us that, in a few particular cases, he wrote what he did without divine inspiration, affords satisfactory evidence, that in all other cases, he was inspired, and that he meant that we should believe him to be so.

But I see no sufficient reason to conclude that, in any of the places referred to, the Apostle meant to disclaim divine inspiration. The texts quoted admit of a satisfactory explanation without supposing this. For might not the Spirit guide the Apostle in giving such *advice*, and in suggesting such prudential considerations, as the peculiar circumstances of Christians required? There are many cases in which it is proper and necessary that God's people should be cast upon their own discretion;—cases where there can be no universal, unbending rules to which every one shall be obliged exactly to conform; but where each man's duty must be determined by his peculiar dispositions and circumstances. And yet, in these very cases, it may be important that something should be said in the way of *advice;* something to assist Christians in the right exercise of their own discretion. And why may not an apostle judge it proper, in such cases, to give some particular instruction? And why may not the divine Spirit so guide him, that he will be sure to give right instruction,—will be sure to suggest such advice or caution as shall be suitable to the occasion, and worthy

of serious regard? Now this is just what the Apostle did, in the passages under consideration. Cases arose, on which the Lord Jesus had given no express precepts or directions, but on which it was important that something should be said to Christians in the way of instruction or counsel. Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, undertook to do this. When the Lord Jesus, during his personal ministry, had given any particular direction relative to the subject, he refers to that as decisive, and calls it *the commandment of the Lord.* "Unto the married command I, yet not I, but the Lord: Let not the wife depart from her husband." This was a matter which Christ had expressly decided; so that what the Apostle here said, was *the commandment of the Lord.* But as to the case of a Christian who had a heathen partner, Christ had given no particular instruction, but had left it among other things, to be regulated by his apostles, who were to speak in his name. So our Apostle says: "But to the rest speak *I*, not the Lord." "Concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give *my judgment.*" "She is happier if she so abide after *my judgment.*" "Herein I give *my advice.*" But it is to be observed that even here, where the Apostle has no express commandment of Christ to repeat, and only gives his own judgment or advice,—he tells us, that he enjoys special divine assistance. He says, "I give my judgment, *as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful;*" that is, as one whom God, in the exercise of his mercy, has made faithful in discharging the apostolic office. Again: "She is happier if she so abide, after my judgment; and I think I have the Spirit of the Lord." There is no reason to suppose that the word δοκέω, *I think*, is intended to indicate any doubt in the Apostle's mind. He probably used this language in the way of modesty and delicacy, when speaking of himself. Similar modes of speech frequently occur, when no doubt or uncertainty is meant to be expressed, but the contrary. Is it not clear, then, that in giving his judgment, in the cases referred to, the Apostle considered himself as having the Spirit of the Lord, and as being thus qualified for the right performance of every part of his office, as an authorized teacher of the Christian religion?

2 Cor. 8: 8, "I speak not by commandment;" κατ' ἐπιταγὴν, *according to*, or *from*, any express command of Christ; and v. 10, "Herein I give my advice;" are to be explained on the same principles with the passages just considered. The distinction intended, was not between what was *inspired* and what was *not inspired*, but between *what Christ himself expressly commanded* and what he left to be regulated by the *counsels of one of his apostles.**

The text, 2 Cor. 11: 17, is to be explained differently. "That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord;" κατὰ κύριον, *according to the Lord;* i. e. *according to his example.* The Apostle was embarrassed and oppressed with the necessity which was laid upon him to speak in his own commendation; and while doing it, charged himself with acting *foolishly, and not according to the example of Christ.* He evidently means either that there was something in what he said which was *apparently* contrary to the unostentatious, humble character of Christ; or something which, in *ordinary* circumstances, would be *actually contrary;* though in the singular circumstances in which he was placed, he felt himself justified in speaking as he did.

As to the objection which some have made against the inspiration of the apostles from the instances of impropriety which appear in their private conduct, I think it necessary at present only to say, that their inspiration is to be understood to imply, not that they were secured against all possible deviations from duty, and made perfectly holy, in their *private capacity;* but *that they were divinely guided and assisted in discharging the apostolic office.* It is very conceivable that, while the apostles were but imperfectly sanctified, and were liable to sin, as *private men;* they might be under infallible divine guidance in their *public capacity as apostles.* We are taught by the Scriptures, that men wholly destitute of goodness, such as Balaam and Caiaphas, were sometimes the subjects of divine inspiration, and were led by it to declare things

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* I am gratified to find that Haldane, Henderson and Gaussen give substantially the same explanation of the texts above mentioned, as I have given in the Lecture

which they would not have declared of themselves. (See John 11: 49—52.) And if men without any holiness, could be divinely inspired; surely the imperfection of holiness which appeared in Paul and Peter, can never be thought inconsistent with their inspiration.

LECTURE XIII.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF DIVINE INSPIRATION MORE PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED.

THE best means of forming a right judgment respecting the nature and extent of inspiration are found in the Scriptures themselves. The subject, generally, presents itself to my mind thus. If the Scriptures contain truth unmixed with error, the divine influence must have secured the writers against all liability to error, and enabled them to teach *pure divine truth.* If the Scriptures really and infallibly express the mind of God on the subjects treated, and so are justly entitled to be called *the word* of God; and if this infallible utterance of the mind of God is beyond what the writers were capable of from the mere exercise of their own rational powers; then they must have had supernatural assistance — must have thought and written under the direction of an intelligence above what is human. And this is only saying, that the work accomplished must have proceeded from an agency sufficient to accomplish it. If we can be satisfied what the work accomplished is, we shall be easily satisfied as to the agency to which it is to be ultimately ascribed.

There are many, who recognize no higher agency in the production of the Scriptures, than that of man. But if we regard the sacred volume, as sustaining the character which the writers themselves attribute to it, we shall at once recognize in its production an intelligence and influence truly divine. The exercise of this divine influence upon the sacred writers is what we mean by *inspiration.*

I shall not stop to reason with those, who question either the power of God to afford men the supernatural guidance and aid here affirmed, or the importance of such aid to enable them to give the necessary instruction on the subject of religion; nor with those who are insensible, how utterly dark, wretched, and hopeless must have been the state of the world, had not a book been written under the direction of an omniscient mind. We must entertain very low conceptions of what the human mind would have been likely to accomplish without a divine revelation, when we find that, even in the enjoyment of such a revelation, it is so difficult to avoid the most erroneous and hurtful opinions, and to obtain any clear apprehensions of divine truth.

To all Christians, the doctrine of divine inspiration must appear exceedingly desirable and important. A full persuasion that those writings, on which they depend for all saving knowledge, had a divine original, must be full of comfort. "If the Apostles did not enjoy that higher divine influence, called inspiration, we might," says Dr. Knapp, "be easily disturbed by the doubt, whether they rightly understood and taught this and the other doctrine of the Christian religion; whether, for example, their faithful attachment to Christ, their love to his person, and high reverence for his character, did not betray them unintentionally and unconsciously into mistaken and exaggerated views concerning his person, his divinity, and his glory in his state of exaltation. It would be easy in this way, if no inspiration of the Bible were admitted, to render doubtful the most important doctrines of Christianity. This is what has been done, especially in modern times, by those who deny inspiration."

The definition which Knapp gives of inspiration, is perhaps as correct as any which has been given. He says, "It may be best defined, according to the representation of the Scriptures themselves, as an *extraordinary divine agency upon teachers, while giving instruction whether oral or written, by which they were taught what and how they should write or speak.*" We express the same thing, substantially, in another form, when we say, that *in writing the Scriptures, the sacred penmen were perfectly under divine guidance; or, they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

Hahn says: "The Holy Scriptures not only deserve credit on the same grounds as the common productions of men of veracity, but possess *divine authority*, in consequence of the *extraordinary assistance of the Spirit of God* which its authors enjoyed. The same reasons which lead us to believe in an extraordinary divine revelation in general, lead us to believe also in a divine assistance enabling the sacred writers to understand and communicate this revelation without mistake; since the ends of revelation would be unattainable, if its first organs were not enabled correctly to understand and communicate it."

The controversy among orthodox divines respecting what is called *verbal inspiration*, appears to arise, in a great measure, from the different senses affixed to the phrase. Dr. Henderson, who is among the most candid and able writers opposed to the doctrine of *verbal* inspiration, seems to understand the doctrine as denoting the *immediate communication* to the writers, of *every word, and syllable and letter* of what they wrote, independently of their intelligent agency, and without any regard to their peculiar mental faculties or habits. While those who most earnestly and successfully contend for the higher views of *inspiration*, particularly Calamy, Haldane, and Gaussen, consider the doctrine they maintain, as entirely consistent with the greatest diversity of mental endowment, culture and taste in the writers, and with the most perfect exercise of their intelligent agency, — consistent with their using their own memory, their own reason, their own manner of thinking, and their own language, — consistent too, with their making what they were to write, the subject of diligent and laborious study, — *only insisting, that it was all under the unerring guidance of the divine Spirit.*

In a controversy of such a character as this, we may often succeed in removing difficulties, and in presenting the subject in a light which will be satisfactory to all concerned, by laying aside an ambiguous word or phrase, and making use of one which will express the idea intended, with clearness and certainty. The word *verbal*, in its common meaning, seems not exactly suited to the subject. According to the best philologists, its leading signification is,

"*spoken; expressed to the ear in words; not written.*" But no one supposes, that when God inspired the sacred writers, he generally spoke to them in audible words. It is indeed true, that he sometimes uttered articulate words in making known his will, as at Sinai, at the baptism of Christ, and on some other occasions. In such cases, he did, properly speaking, make *verbal* communications, or give *verbal* instructions. But we should hardly call this *verbal inspiration.* Who can suppose that God commonly taught inspired men what to write by speaking *words* in their ears, as a man teaches his amanuensis? His influence was *inward.*

Now it would be nothing strange, if applying the word verbal to inspiration, and thus giving it an unusual sense, should occasion perplexity and confusion. For the sake of avoiding this evil, why would it not be expedient to employ such words, as will convey the idea intended, clearly and definitely, and, if necessary, to incur the inconvenience of using an exact explanation, instead of the word or phrase which causes the difficulty?

The real question, and the whole question at issue, may be stated thus; *did the work of the divine Spirit in the sacred penmen relate to the language they used, or their manner of expressing their ideas? And if so, how far, and in what way?*

All those, with whom we are concerned in the discussion of this question, hold that divine inspiration had some respect to the language employed by the inspired writers, at least, in the way of general *supervision.* And Dr. Henderson shows in various passages of his excellent Lectures, that there is no material difference between him, and those who maintain higher ground. He allows that, to a certain extent, what is called *verbal inspiration*, or *the inspiration of words*, took place. "In recording what is immediately spoken with an audible voice by Jehovah, or by an angel interpreter; in giving expression to points of revelation which entirely surpassed the comprehension of the writers; in recording prophecies, the minute bearings of which they did not perceive; in short, in committing to writing any of the dictates of the Spirit, which they could not have otherwise accurately expressed, the writers," he alleges, "were supplied with the words as well as the matter."

He says, "that even when Biblical writers made use of their own faculties, and wrote each one in his own manner, yet, without having their mental constitution at all disturbed, they were always secured by celestial influence against the adoption of any forms of speech, or collocation of words, that would have injured the exhibition of divine truth, or that did not adequately give it expression."

He declares his belief that the Scriptures were written, not under a partial or imperfect, but under a plenary and infallible inspiration; that they were entirely the result of divine intervention, and are to be regarded as the oracles of Jehovah. Referring to 2 Tim. 3: 16, he says "we are here expressly taught the divine inspiration of the whole of the Old Testament Codex; that the Scriptures are inspired *as written documents;* that they are the result of the special and extraordinary influence of the Spirit, and contain whatever the Spirit caused to be written for our instruction." Referring to 1 Cor. 2: 13, he says; "It is past all dispute that the Apostle here unequivocally ascribes both the doctrines which he and his fellow-laborers taught, and their *manner of propounding* them, to the influence of the same divine agent;" that the passage conveys the idea "that *the style or mode of expression* which they used, were such as they were instructed by the Spirit to employ;" that in the passage alluded to, the Apostle refers "to the *entire character of the style* which the first teachers of Christianity were taught to use in announcing its all-important doctrines."

The passages in which such terms as *the word of God, the Lord spake*, etc., occur, are, in his view, descriptive of immediate verbal communications. He supposes that, in all such cases, *words* were literally spoken, or audibly pronounced by God himself, or by an angel in his name. In this opinion, however, I think he is mistaken. For, unquestionably, the word of the Lord often, if not generally, came to the prophets in the way of dreams, or other modes of inward suggestion.

The doctrine of a plenary inspiration of all Scripture in regard to the language employed, as well as the thoughts communicated, is so obviously important, and so consonant to the feelings of sincere piety, that those evangelical Christians who are pressed with

speculative objections against it, frequently, in the honesty of their hearts, advance opinions which fairly imply it. This is the case, as we have seen, with Dr. Henderson, who says, that the divine Spirit guided the sacred penmen in writing the Scriptures; that their mode of expression was such as they were instructed by the Spirit to employ; that Paul ascribes, not only the doctrines which the apostles taught, but the entire character of their style, to the influence of the Spirit.

In regard to this point, therefore, there appears to be little or no ground for controversy. For if God so influenced the sacred writers, that they wrote just *what* he intended, and in the *manner* he intended, the end is secured; and what they wrote is as truly *his word*, as though he had written it with his own hand on tables of stone, without any human instrumentality. The very words of the decalogue were all such as God chose. And they would have been equally so, if Moses had been moved by the divine Spirit to write them with *his* hand. The exact truth is, that *the writers themselves* were the subjects of the divine influence. The Spirit employed them as active instruments, and directed them in writing both as to matter and manner. They wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The matter, in many cases, was what they before knew, and the manner was entirely conformed to their habits; it was *their own*. But what was written was none the less inspired on that account. God may have influenced and guided an apostle as infallibly in writing what he had before known, as in writing a new revelation. And God may have influenced Paul or John to write a book in *his own peculiar style*, and that influence may have been as real and as efficacious, as if the style had been what some would call a *divine style*. It *was* a divine style, if the writer used it under divine direction. It was a divine style, and it was, at the same time, a human style, and the writer's own style, all in one. Just as the believer's exercises are his own acts, and, at the same time, are the effects of divine influence. "In efficacious grace," says Edwards, "we are not merely passive; nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is

what he produces, namely, our own acts. God is the only proper Author and foundation; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive, and wholly active. In the Scriptures, the same things are represented as from God, and from us, — not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is our act and our duty. These things are agreeable to that text, 'God worketh in you both to will and to do.'" The mental exercises of Paul and of John had their own characteristic peculiarities, as much as their style. God was the Author of John's mind, and all that was peculiar to his mental faculties and habits, as really as of Paul's mind, and what was peculiar to him. And in the work of inspiration, he used and directed for his own purposes, what was peculiar to each. When God inspired different men, he did not make their minds and tastes all alike, nor did he make their language alike. Nor had he any occasion for this; for while they had different mental faculties and habits, they were as capable of being infallibly directed by the divine Spirit, and infallibly speaking and writing divine truth, as though their mental faculties and habits had been all exactly alike. And it is manifest, that the Scriptures, written by such a variety of inspired men, and each part agreeably to the peculiar talents and style of the writer, are not only equally from God, but, taken together, are far better adapted to the purpose of general instruction, and all the objects to be accomplished by revelation, than if they had been written by one man, and in one and the same manner.

Various distinctions have been made in regard to the kinds and degrees of inspiration afforded to the sacred writers. But the sacred writers themselves make no such distinction. They declare that *all Scripture is divinely inspired.* This implies that the writers of Scripture were constantly under the guidance of the Spirit It seems, therefore, more agreeable to the views which the Scripture itself expresses, and more favorable to its influence, to say, that the writers were so guided by the divine Spirit, that, in every part of their work, they were rendered infallible, and wrote just what God willed they should write; so that the sacred volume en-

tirely answers to the mind of God, and has nothing, either as to matter or form, which he did not see to be suited to the great object of a divine revelation.

In some cases we may perhaps find it convenient to speak of the influence which God exercised over inspired men, as a *divine superintendency;* in other cases, as a *divine suggestion.* By *a divine superintendency*, we may designate such a divine control over the sacred writers, as effectually preserved them from error, and enabled them to write that, and that only, which corresponded with the will of God, and which can justly be considered as *the word of God.* And by a *divine suggestion*, we may properly enough indicate that divine influence, which makes known what was before unknown, or causes one to recollect what would otherwise escape his recollection. But I prefer a definition, which represents inspiration, simply, *as a supernatural guidance or assistance of the Spirit afforded to the sacred writers, guarding them against error, and leading them to write just what God saw to be suited to accomplish the ends of revelation.* If God would have them make a record, for future use, of what was at the time generally known, he influenced them to make such a record. If he would have them predict future events, or teach doctrines or precepts never taught before; he influenced them to do this. And universally, whatever God would have them do as sacred writers, he prompted them to undertake, and assisted them to accomplish, in every case granting them just such assistance as the end he had in view required.

Some have supposed, that the influence which inspired men had, related exclusively *to the thoughts or conceptions of their own minds.* But this supposition seems to me not accordant with what the inspired writers themselves advance on the subject. As the writers of Scripture nowhere limit the divine influence which they enjoyed, to the conceptions of their own minds; neither would I do it. And as there are some texts which clearly imply, that the divine guidance afforded to inspired men, had respect to their language, how can I entertain any further doubt? And I find myself still more satisfied by considering the cases, in which the apostles and

other Christians were miraculously assisted to speak with *other tongues;* because, in all these cases, the agency of the Spirit related directly to the language they used. The fact necessarily implies this. For to say that the divine Spirit assisted them to speak in a foreign language which they had not learned, and yet that the divine assistance afforded them had no respect to *language*, would be a contradiction.

The doctrine of inspiration, understood in any proper sense, seems clearly to imply, that the divine influence which the prophets and apostles enjoyed, must have pertained to the manner in which they communicated divine truth. For can we suppose that God moved his servants to write a particular doctrine or fact, and yet did not influence them to write it in a suitable manner? — that, after prompting them to communicate something of consequence, he so abandoned them, that they were liable, as every man without divine assistance is, to fall into mistakes, or to make the communication in a manner less proper in itself, and less agreeable to the mind of God, than some other?

One argument which has been urged against the supposition that divine inspiration had a respect to language, is, that *the language employed by the inspired writers exhibits no marks of a divine interference, but is perfectly conformed to the genius and taste of the writers.*

The fact has already been admitted. But I ask again, how does this fact support the opinion of those who allege it? May not God exercise a perfect superintendency over inspired writers as to the language they use, and yet each one of them write in his own style, and according to his own taste? May not God give such aid to his servants, that, while using their own style, they will certainly be secured against all mistakes, and exhibit the truth with perfect propriety? It is unquestionable, that Isaiah, Paul, and John might be under the entire direction of the Holy Spirit, even as to language, and at the same time, that each one of them might write in his own manner; and that the peculiar manner of each might be adapted to answer an important end; and that the variety of style, thus introduced into the sacred volume, might be

suited to excite a livelier interest in the minds of men, and to secure to them a far greater amount of good, than could ever have been derived from any one mode of writing. The great variety existing among men as to their natural talents, and their peculiar manner of thinking and writing, may, in this way, be turned to account in the work of revelation, as well as in the concerns of common life. It is a matter of fact, that God has made use of this variety, and given the Holy Spirit to men, differing widely from each other in regard to natural endowments, knowledge, and style, and employed them, with all their various gifts, as agents in writing the Holy Scriptures. And what color of reason can we have to suppose, that the language which they used was less under the divine direction on account of this variety, than if it had been perfectly uniform throughout?

The following remarks are from Wilson's Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity.

"In order to trace out the WONDERFUL UNION OF DIVINE AND HUMAN AGENCY in the inspiration of the Scriptures, we must collect all the facts of the case, as they lie in the New Testament. We must compare what is decidedly the part of God, with what appears to be the part of man. The facts on the one hand, are these. The books are given by divine inspiration. They are the words of the Holy Ghost; they are the infallible standard of truth; no intermixture whatever of human frailty or mistake is to be found in the communication they make to us of Christianity. These are the facts on one side of the case. This is the part of God.

"In order to collect the phenomena on the other side, let us open the New Testament again. We see, on the very face of the whole, that the writers speak naturally,—use the style, language, manner of address familiar to them. There are peculiar casts of talents, expression, modes of reasoning in each author. The language is that of the country and age where they lived. They employ all their faculties, they search, examine, weigh, reason, as holy and sincere men, in such a cause, might be supposed to do. They use all their natural and acquired knowledge; their memory furnishes them with facts, or the documents and authentic records

of the time are consulted by them for information. They plead with those to whom they are sent, they address the heart, they expostulate, they warn, they invite. The mind of man is working everywhere. In the historical books, the evangelists follow their own trains of recollection. They relate incidents as they struck them, or were reported to them. In the devotional and epistolary books again, natural talent, appropriate feelings and judgment, the peculiarities of the individual, are manifest. These are the phenomena on the other side; these are the part of man. The facts are numerous, and might be multiplied with every fresh perusal of the sacred books.

"The two classes constitute the apparently contradictory facts of the case. The books are divine, and yet they are human. They are infallible, and yet indited by mortals like ourselves. They are the word of God, and yet the word of man.

"By tracing, however, the inward structure of the books further, we perceive that the plan and method of the divine inspiration reconciles all these appearances, and subserves the most important practical purposes. It unites the two classes of phenomena, the plenary influences of the Almighty Spirit, and the free and natural exertion of the characteristic faculties of the writers. The divine Spirit guarded the sacred penmen when they would otherwise have gone astray, superintended and watched over every step of their progress, suggested by direct discoveries what lay beyond the reach of their means of knowledge, and directed them to every topic, which, to his infinite wisdom appeared necessary upon the whole, for the instruction of the church and the conversion of mankind. Thus, on the one hand, the inspiration did not supersede, but support, elevate, and direct them in the use of their natural faculties, of their stores of knowledge, of their experience and observation, and their efforts of recollection and reasoning. The human agency on the other hand, did not weaken or defeat the supernatural communications; but conveyed them to men, moulded by the conceptions, and expressed in the words of common life. The facts of the case by no means imply that man mingled his frailties and errors with the revealed truths of Chris-

tianity; but, simply, that God was pleased to use man as his instrument. The human agency was subordinate to the divine. The Almighty Spirit moved and gently led on; the holy penmen followed the guidance. God inspired; man indited and wrote. The wisdom of the Creator sustained the weakness of the creature. The books, therefore, are both human and divine, — divine as to the matter, human as to the manner; — divine, as to the supernatural tendency and direction; human, as to the means employed; divine, as to the revelation; human, as to the instruments; the word of God as to the doctrine, the word of man as to the channel of conveyance.

"Nor is the difficulty of explaining this union of divine and human agency in the inspiration of the Scriptures any greater, than in other instances in the government of mankind, where the Almighty *worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will*, and yet by means which do not interfere with the free agency, nor alter the moral characteristics, nor lessen the responsibility of man.

"In all the parts, the operations of the mind and habits of the writers were allowed to act; but were exempted from error and mistake. In all the parts, the divine Spirit moved the writers to such subjects, and such a manner of treating them, as befitted the designs of infinite wisdom.

"If God has given a revelation of his will, and has consigned all the parts of that revelation to books, by the hands of apostles, endowed with miraculous qualifications, those books are the infallible word of God himself. They can contain no mixture whatever of mistake or error. If God has further been pleased to permit the sacred writers to exercise their own faculties; to employ all their natural and acquired knowledge; and to leave throughout an impression of human feeling in their way of delivering this revelation, then their books are to be interpreted and understood, according to the ordinary rules of common life — that awe only being preserved, and that caution used in the application of those rules, which the solemnity of the occasion requires. Thus truth meets the mind, entire and simple, in its own harmony and force.

The human form of the writing lessens not the divine impress of the inspiration. The whole Scripture is divine. It resembles not the mystic image seen by the Babylonish monarch, the feet of which were partly of iron and partly of clay; and which, smitten at length, fell prostrate and helpless; but it stands erect and secure; its materials are all of heavenly origin; it rests in every part on the immediate support and power of God; and defies unshaken the violent assaults, and more secret aggressions of its foes."

To prove that divine inspiration had no respect to the language of the sacred writers, it is further alleged, that *even the same doctrine is taught and the same event described in a different manner by different writers.*

This fact I also admit. But how does it prove that inspiration had no respect to language? Is not the variety alleged a manifest advantage, as to the impression which is likely to be made upon the minds of men? Is not testimony, which is substantially the same, always considered as entitled to higher credit, when it is given by different witnesses in different language, and in a different order? And is it not perfectly reasonable to suppose, that, in making a revelation, God would exert his influence and control over inspired men in such a manner, that, by exhibiting the same doctrines and facts in different ways, they should make a more salutary impression, and should more effectually compass the great ends of a revelation?

Apply these suggestions to the diversity in the narratives of the Evangelists. It will not be denied, that God determined that there should be four narratives of the life and death of Jesus, from four historians. If the narratives were all alike, three of them would be useless. Indeed, such a circumstance would create suspicion, and would bring discredit upon the whole gospel. The narratives must then be different. And if, besides this useful diversity, it is found that the seeming contradictions can be satisfactorily reconciled, and if each of the narratives is given in the peculiar style and manner of the writer; then all is natural and unexceptionable; and we have the highest evidence of the credibility and truth of the narratives.

What I have to advance on this part of the subject may be summed up in these two positions. First; the variety of manner apparent among different inspired writers, even when treating of the same subjects, is far better suited to promote the object of divine revelation, than a perfect uniformity. Second; it is agreeable to our worthiest conceptions of God and his administration, that he should make use of the best means for the accomplishment of his designs; and of course, that he should impart the gift of inspiration to men of different tastes and habits, and should lead them, while writing the Scriptures, to exhibit all the variety of manner naturally arising from the diversified character of their minds.

But another argument is urged against supposing that inspiration had any respect to language; namely, *that the supposition of a divine influence in this respect is unnecessary; that the sacred writers, having the requisite information in regard to the subjects on which they were to write, might, so far as language is concerned, be left entirely to their own judgment and fidelity.*

But this view of the subject is far from being satisfactory. For whatever may be said as to the judgment and fidelity of those who wrote the Scriptures, there is one important circumstance which cannot be accounted for, without supposing them to have enjoyed a guidance above that of their own minds; namely, that *they were infallibly preserved from every mistake or impropriety in the manner of writing.* If we should admit that the divine superintendence and guidance afforded to the inspired writers had no relation at all to the manner in which they exhibited either doctrines or facts; we should feel ourselves at liberty to question the propriety of their representations. We should consider them as liable to all the inadvertencies and mistakes, to which uninspired men are commonly liable; and should think ourselves perfectly justified in undertaking to charge them with real errors and faults as to style, and to show how their language might have been improved; and, in short, to treat their writings just as we treat the writings of other men. "Here," we might say, "Paul was unfortunate in the choice of words; and here his language does not express the ideas

which he must have intended to convey. Here the style of John was inadvertent; and here it was faulty; and here it would have been more agreeable to the nature of the subject, and would have more accurately expressed the truth, had it been altered thus." If the language of the sacred writers did not come under the inspection of the Holy Spirit, and if they were left, as other writers are, to their own unaided faculties in regard to every thing which pertained to the manner of writing; then, evidently, we might use the same freedom in animadverting upon their style, as upon the style of other writers. But who could treat the volume of inspiration in this manner, without impiety?

Far be it from me to indulge a curiosity, which would pry into things not intended for human intelligence. And far be it from me to expend zeal in supporting opinions not warranted by the word of God. But this one point I think specially important; namely, *that the sacred writers had such direction of the Holy Spirit, that they were secured against all liability to error, and enabled to write just what God pleased; so that what they wrote is, in truth, the word of God, and can never be subject to any charge of mistake either as to matter or form.* Whether this perfect correctness and propriety of language resulted from the divine guidance *directly* or *indirectly*, is a question of no consequence. If the Spirit of God directs the minds of inspired men, and gives them just conceptions relative to the subjects on which they are to write; and if he constitutes and maintains a connection, true and invariable, between their conceptions, and the language they employ to express them; the language must, in this way, be as infallible, and as worthy of God, as though it were dictated *directly* by the Holy Spirit. But to assert that the sacred writers used such language as they chose, or such as was natural to them, without any special divine superintendence, and that, in respect to style, they are to be regarded as equally liable to mistakes with other writers, is contrary to the representations which they themselves make, and is suited to diminish our confidence in the word of God. For how could we have entire confidence in the representations of Scripture, if, after God had instructed the minds of

the sacred writers in the truth to be communicated, he gave them up to all the inadvertencies and errors, to which unaided human nature is exposed, and took no effectual care that their manner of writing should be according to his will?

But besides what has been said, I have a strong objection to *the principle* which is involved in the reasoning now under consideration. For if we may deny that the divine guidance, afforded to the sacred writers, had any respect to their language, on the pretence, that they were able to write without it, and so that the divine guidance was *unnecessary;* we may, on the same pretence, deny that the divine guidance had any respect to the greater part of the *subjects* on which they wrote. There is just as much reason for saying, that they were of themselves generally competent to form their own *conceptions*, and so had no need of supernatural aid in this respect. It is just as reasonable to say, that Moses could recollect what took place at the Red Sea, and that Paul could recollect that he was once a persecutor, and Peter, what took place on the mount of transfiguration, without supernatural aid, as to say, that they could, without such aid, make a proper record of those recollections. We believe a real and infallible guidance of the Spirit in both respects; because this is taught in the Scriptures.

To prove that the inspiration of the sacred writers did not extend to their language, our opponents refer to the different accounts of the number slain in Num. 25: 9 and 1 Cor. 10: 8. Who, they say, can believe that the *language* was inspired when one writer says that 24,000 were slain, and the other 23,000? But it is easy to see, that the difficulty presses with all its force upon those who assert the inspiration of the *thoughts*. For surely they will not say, that the sacred writers had *true thoughts* in their minds, and yet uttered them in the language of falsehood. This would contradict their own idea of a sure connection between the conceptions of the mind and the utterance of them in suitable words; and would clearly show that they themselves feel it to be necessary that the divine guidance should extend to the *words* of inspired men, as well as to their thoughts. If Paul, through inadvertence, committed a mistake in saying

that 23,000 fell in one day, it must have been a mistake in his *thoughts*, as well as in his words. For when he said 23,000, had he not the idea of that number in his mind? If, then, there was a mistake, it lay in his *thoughts*. But if there was no mistake in either of the writers, then there is nothing to prove that inspiration did not extend to the language. If, however, there was a real mistake, then the question is not, what becomes of *verbal* inspiration, but, what becomes of inspiration in any sense?

Some writers attempt to remove the difficulty in this manner. The first writer says 24,000 were slain, meaning to include in that number all who died in consequence of that rebellion. The other writer says 23,000 fell *in one day;* leaving us to conclude that an addition of 1000 fell the next day. But it appears to me more satisfactory to suppose, that neither of the writers intended to state the exact number, this being of no consequence to their object. The real number might be between twenty-three and twenty-four thousand, and it might be sufficient for them to express it in general terms, one of them calling it 24,000, and the other 23,000; that is, *about so many*,—either of the numbers being accurate enough to make the impression designed. Suppose that the exact number was twenty three thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven, and that both the writers knew this. It was not at all necessary, in order to maintain their character as men of veracity, that they should, when writing for *such a purpose*, mention the exact number. The particularity and length of the expression would have been inconvenient, and might have made a less desirable impression of the evil of sin, and the justice of God, than expressing it more briefly in a round number; as we often say, with a view merely to make a strong impression, that in such a battle ten thousand, or fifty thousand, or half a million were slain, no one supposing that we mean to state the number with arithmetical exactness, as our object does not require this. And who can doubt, that the divine Spirit might lead the sacred penman to make use of this principle of rhetoric, and to speak of those who were slain, according to the common practice in such a case, in round numbers?

I admit that, independently of what we learn from the inspired writers themselves, we could not prove that they actually had supernatural aid in regard to the language they employed. But if this is expressly taught or fairly implied in their own declarations; then there are no presumptions or reasonings, which we can admit to be conclusive against it, and, to be consistent Christians, *we must believe it on the authority of God's word.*

Let us then briefly examine this point, as it is presented in the Scriptures, and see whether we find sufficient reason to deny that inspiration related to language.

First. We find that the apostles were the subjects of such a divine inspiration as enabled them to speak *with other tongues.* Here, as I have already remarked, *inspiration related directly to language.*

Secondly. In some instances, inspired men had not in their own minds a clear understanding of the things which they spake or wrote. One instance of this, before referred to, is the case of Daniel, who heard and repeated what the Angel said, though he did not understand it. Dan. 12: 7—9. This was also the case with the prophets referred to, 1 Peter 1: 10—12. And is there not reason to think this may have been the case with many of the prophetic representations contained in the Psalms, and many of the symbolic rites of the Mosaic institute? Various matters are found in the Old Testament, which were not intended so much for the benefit of the writers, or their contemporaries, as for the benefit of future ages. And this might have been a sufficient reason why they should be left without a clear understanding of the things which they wrote. In such cases, it would seem that inspired men were led to make use of expressions, the meaning of which they did not fully understand — that the teaching of the Spirit related rather to the *words*, than to the *sense.*

Thirdly. Examine the texts which most directly relate to the subject.

The passage 2 Pet. 1: 21, is a remarkable one. It asserts, that "holy men of God *spake* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." There is surely nothing here, which limits the divine

influence to the conceptions of their minds. They were moved by the Holy Ghost to *speak* or *write*. 2 Tim. 3: 16. "All Scripture is divinely inspired." What is *Scripture?* It is divine truth *written*, not merely conceived in the mind.

In Heb. 1: 1, it is said that "God *spake* to the fathers by the prophets; that is, he influenced the prophets to *utter* or *make known* important truths by the use of proper words.

I have argued in favor of the inspiration of the apostles, from their commission. They were sent by Christ *to teach the truths of religion in his stead.* It was an arduous work, and in the execution of it they needed and enjoyed much divine assistance. But forming right conceptions of Christianity in their own minds, was not the great work assigned to the apostles. If the divine assistance reached only to this, it reached only to that which concerned them as *private men*, and which they might have possessed, though they had never been commissioned to teach others. As *apostles*, they were to preach the Gospel to all who could be brought to hear it, and to make a record of divine truth for the benefit of future ages. Now can you suppose, that the divine assistance afforded them had no respect to their main business, and that, in the momentous and difficult work of *communicating* the truths of religion, either orally, or by writing, they were left without divine guidance, and so exposed to all the errors and inadvertencies of uninspired men?

But we must not stop here. For that divine assistance, which we might reasonably suppose would have been granted to the apostles in the work of *teaching* divine truth, is the very thing which Christ promised them in the texts before cited. I shall refer only to Matt. 10: 19, 20, "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought *how* or *what* ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." This promise, as Knapp says, implies, that "divine assistance should extend not only to *what* they should say, but to the *manner* in which they should say it." It is not, however, to be understood as implying, that the apostles were not rational and voluntary agents

in the discharge of their office. But it implies that, through the influence of the Spirit, they should say what God would have them to say, without any liability to mistake, either as to the matter or manner.

From the above cited promise, taken in connection with the instances of its accomplishment which are recorded in the Acts of the apostles, it becomes evident, that *God may exert his highest influence upon his servants, so as completely to guide them in thought and in utterance, in regard to subjects which lie mostly within the province of their natural faculties.* For in those speeches of the apostles which are left on record, we find that most of the things which they declared, were things which, for aught that appears, they might have known, and might have expressed to others, in the natural exercise of their own faculties. This principle being admitted, and kept steadily in view, will relieve us of many difficulties in regard to the subject before us.

The passage, 1 Cor. 2: 12, 13, already cited, is very far from favoring the opinion, that inspiration had no respect to the language of the apostles, or that it related exclusively to their thoughts. "Which things we speak, *not in the words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." The Apostle avoided the style and the manner of teaching, which prevailed among the wise men of Greece, and made use of a style, which corresponded with the nature of his subject, and the end he had in view. And this, he tells us, he did, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. His language, or manner of teaching, was the thing to which the divine influence particularly referred. Storr and Flatt give the following interpretation of this text: "Paul," they say, "asserts that the doctrines of Christianity were revealed to him by the almighty agency of God himself; and finally, that the inspiration of the divine Spirit extended even to his *words*, and to all his *exhibitions* of revealed truths." They add, that "Paul clearly distinguishes between the doctrine itself, and the manner in which it is communicated."

If it should be thought to be an objection to the views I have expressed, that there is no appearance of anything superhuman,

or preternatural, in the language of Scripture, I would ask what appearance of this there could be, on the supposition that the divine Spirit actually superintended, or even prompted, the language employed. The language, in order to answer the end, must still be human. The modes of speech, the figures, and everything relating to the style, must be conformed to common usage. They must be so, even if God himself should make a communication *directly*, by uttering a voice from heaven. Such a direct communication he actually made in the testimony he gave to Christ at his baptism. And he made a direct communication in another form, when he wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone. And yet, in both of these, the language was, in all respects, according to common usage. Why then should it not be so, where he makes a communication through human agency? Why should we suppose he would depart from the common modes of speech? And admitting that the common modes of speech are used, why should we suppose that God would set aside the natural powers of the writers, and make thoughts and words for them, without any use of their minds, or their organs of speech? Why should we entertain so strange and senseless an imagination?

On the whole, after carefully investigating the subject of inspiration, we are confirmed in the important conclusion, that "all Scripture is divinely inspired;" that the sacred penmen wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and that these representations are to be understood as implying, that the writers had, in all respects, both as to matter and manner, a constant and effectual guidance of the divine Spirit. And we are still more confirmed in this conclusion, because we find, that it begets in those who seriously adopt it an acknowledgement of the divine origin of Scripture, a reverence for its teachings, and a practical regard to its requirements, like what appeared in Christ and his apostles. Being convinced that the Bible has, in all parts and in all respects, the seal of the Almighty, and that it is truly and entirely from God, we are led by reason, conscience and piety, to bow submissively to its high authority, implicitly to believe its doctrines, however incomprehensible, and cordially to obey its precepts, however

contrary to our natural inclinations. We come to it from day to day, not as judges, but as learners; never questioning the propriety or utility of any of its contents. This precious word of God is the perfect standard of our faith, and the rule of our life — our comfort in affliction, and our sure guide to heaven.

LECTURE XIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION APPLIED TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF SCRIPTURE — REFLECTIONS.

THAT *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*, is a doctrine indescribably precious to every Christian, and in the highest degree important to the interests of the world. And it is a doctrine which must be happy or dreadful in its consequences, to all who enjoy the light of revelation.

In order to guard against hurtful mistakes relative to this doctrine, and to give the contemplation of it the most salutary influence, it is important that we should well consider *the particular manner in which it is to be applied to different parts of Scripture.* This is one of the remaining points to which I would invite your attention.

No one can be so absurd as to suppose that the speeches of uninspired men, recorded in Scripture as historical facts, were themselves originally dictated by the Holy Spirit. The object of the sacred volume requires, that it should record the speeches of wicked men, as well as of good men; and the speeches of good men who were not inspired, as well as of those who were inspired. For example, it was important that the Evangelists, in their history of the Saviour, should relate the cavils, reproaches, and false accusations, which his enemies uttered against him. But who ever imagined that his enemies were prompted to utter these by the Holy Spirit? The Evangelists have recorded the words which Peter used in denying his Lord. But no one ever imagined that he was prompted to utter those rash and sinful words by the influence of the Spirit. When we say, *the Scriptures are divinely inspired*, our meaning is,

that the divine Spirit guided the *writers*. Whether those persons whose words are recorded, were inspired or not, must in every case be determined by the records themselves. In some instances they evidently were inspired; in other instances they were not. Our doctrine is, that *those who made the record were under infallible divine guidance*. If they undertook to record historical facts, they were enabled to do it with perfect historical truth, and to extend their record to just such a length, and to give it just such a form, as was suited to the design which God had in view. If they undertook to teach the doctrines of religion, or to announce divine commands, promises, or predictions, they were enabled to do it infallibly. And if they undertook to give instruction by parables, allegories, or symbolical representations; the Spirit of God enabled them to make use of such parables, allegories, or symbols, as were adapted to the end in view.

To make this matter as plain as possible, I shall refer to a few examples.

I begin with the book of Job. Though we may have many reasons to believe, that the account which the writer gives of the conversation between Job and his three friends had substantial fact for its basis; yet it would be unreasonable to suppose, that a conversation actually took place in Hebrew poetry, just such as is here recorded. The case does not require anything like this. The object of the writer was not to relate simple historical facts, but to exhibit just views of the character and government of God, and to expose and correct the various misconceptions of men on that subject. Our doctrine is, that the divine Spirit so guided the writer, that the representations he made in this familiar dialogue, are well adapted to give the instruction intended, as to the righteousness and majesty of God, the errors of men, and other related subjects. When therefore we read a particular passage, containing an expression of Job, or of his wife, or of one of his friends, we are not to infer from the writer's inspiration, that the particular expression referred to, was conformed to truth, or that the person who originally uttered it was divinely inspired, any more than we are to infer from the inspiration of the Evangelists, that the various charges which they declare to have been brought against Christ

were conformed to truth. In every such case, our business is to discover what was the design of the writer, or the design of God, in what was written. The inspiration of a writer implies, that the instruction which he communicates is true. The author of the book of Job wished to show, how a good man may be affected by long-continued afflictions; what mistakes he may make in judging of the divine administration; what impatience he may indulge; what a wrong construction others may put upon the conduct of God towards him; what gracious methods God may take to instruct and humble him; and how happy, in the end, is the effect of divine chastisements on the man who is upright in heart, and who enjoys divine teaching. The Holy Spirit prompted the writer to aim at these important ends, and, with a view to their accomplishment, to write a book consisting chiefly of a dialogue between Job and his three friends, and of a solemn address to Job from the Creator and Sovereign of the world. The inspired writer was enabled to frame such a dialogue, and such an address from God, as should be agreeable to nature and truth, and convey with clearness and force, the most important knowledge respecting God and man. This is what I mean, when I say, the Book of Job was divinely inspired.

As another example, take the Proverbs of Solomon. God saw it to be necessary to the highest improvement of men, that they should have, for constant use, a collection of *maxims*, or *wise practical sayings*, resulting from observation and experience. This was one of the modes of instruction, which God judged to be important to our welfare. He therefore moved and assisted Solomon to write a book of Proverbs, the greater part of which were probably suggested by his own experience, though some of them were doubtless in common use before. But in whatever way he became furnished with these maxims of divine truth, he selected and wrote them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As to the Prophets, the nature of the subject shows, that the Spirit of God not only guided them in committing their predictions to writing, but in a supernatural way made them acquainted with those events to which their predictions related.

In short, whether the writer was a prophet, a historian, or a teacher in any other form, the divine Spirit assisted him to perform his work — that assistance always having been adapted to the nature and circumstances of what the writer was to execute.

Secondly. Another point, to which I invite your attention is, *the perfection of the Bible.* This clearly results from the doctrine of inspiration as above explained.

I speak not now of an *abstract* or *absolute* perfection, but of a *relative* perfection — a perfection which respects the ends of revelation. It would be impious to suppose that a book, written by inspiration of God, is not perfectly adapted to the purposes for which it was designed. We may indeed frame an idea of a kind of perfection, which does not belong to the Bible. And we may, in like manner, frame an idea of a kind of perfection which does not belong to what God has done in creation. We may imagine that it would be a perfection in the scheme of his works, if houses, and carriages, and clothing, and all the instruments which can be necessary or useful to man, and all the books fitted to promote his improvement, were produced as the trees of the forest are, according to the laws of the natural world, without any concurrence of human agency. But who does not see that this would be an imperfection, and would frustrate some of the most important ends of creation in respect to man? For what exercise or improvement could there be of man's active powers, either corporeal or mental, if all that he desires were formed ready for use without his agency?

The most common objection against the perfection of the Bible, is, *that so many difficulties and obscurities are found in it.* But if the Bible had no difficulties or obscurities; if all were, at first view, perfectly plain and easy; what occasion would there be for mental exertion? And what opportunity for improvement? This fancied perfection could not be made out completely, unless the Bible, throughout, should be plain and easy to every human being, even to a child. Such a perfection, could it exist, would supersede all motive to improvement. But, in reality, it is impossible. For how can subjects so vast and so complex be made perfectly plain and easy to those who have but little information, and who

are in the infancy of their being? This supposed perfection of the Bible would require, either that the subjects of which it treats should be lowered down infinitely, so as to meet the littleness of the mind of man, and the mind of a child; or that the mind should be infinitely enlarged and exalted, so as to be able at once to comprehend the vastness of these subjects.

We find it to be one great object of the Creator in the natural world, to furnish man with materials, from which he may, by his own exertions, form whatever will conduce to his convenience or comfort. And we know by experience, that the exertions we make to procure the necessaries and accommodations of life, not only conduce to the improvement of our faculties, but become an unfailing source of enjoyment. It follows then, that so far as our improvement or enjoyment is concerned, it would greatly detract from the perfection of the creation, if every thing we need or desire were put into our hands, without any forethought or labor of ours. And is not the same true in regard to revelation? It is certainly essential to our highest enjoyment in religion, that we should diligently exert the powers of our minds in the acquisition of religious knowledge. But what occasion or opportunity could there be for mental exertion, if every thing in the Bible were, at first view, perfectly plain and obvious? That we may, on the whole, have the highest amount of enjoyment, it is manifestly necessary that we should meet with difficulties and obscurities, and that these should in some degree continue through every stage of our progress in the acquisition of divine knowledge. For if difficulties and obscurities should cease, and there should be nothing left beyond the present grasp of our understanding, what motive could we have for any further efforts?

That the Bible is suited to call forth our diligent efforts, we find to be a matter of fact. The man, who applies himself in earnest to understand its contents, meets with difficulties in abundance. And as he proceeds in acquiring knowledge, and in clearing away the difficulties which first arose, new difficulties occur, which he was before incapable of discovering. And every advance he makes, gives him ability to see new difficulties, which are to

be overcome by new exertion. Now I hold it to be no fault, but a real perfection of the Bible, that it thus calls us, in every stage of improvement, to encounter difficulties; to get a knowledge of what was before unknown; and thus to keep up that mental effort, which God has made essential to the end of our being, and without which the Scriptures would be, in a great measure, dull and tasteless.

If we keep in mind, that the Bible is not a book to be read indolently, or to be understood passively, but is intended for our instruction and moral discipline through every period of our life, and that, to answer this purpose fully, it must excite our persevering diligence, and be a constant means of improving all our intellectual and moral powers; we shall be satisfied, that those very things, which have been complained of as defects in the word of God, are essential to its perfection.

It is not meant to be implied in the foregoing remarks, that the inspired penmen purposely introduced difficulties and obscurities into their writings, for the sake of exercising and improving our minds. These difficulties and obscurities arise necessarily from the nature of the subjects to which they relate, and from human ignorance and weakness.

That we may be completely satisfied on this subject, we must consider that the Bible is intended to be a subject of study, and a means of intellectual and moral culture to good men, through all ages. Had it been intended merely for one particular society of men, or for one period of time, a great difference would undoubtedly have been made in its structure. But God designed this holy book to be the study of all ages; and, accordingly, he has so formed it, that many things, which are obscure and unintelligible to men of one age, shall be perfectly clear to men in a succeeding age. A particular doctrine of the Bible may now be attended with an obscurity, which the superior advantages of a future period may clear away. The doctrine itself is contained in the Bible. God has declared it. But owing to various causes, we do not fully understand it, and of course do not fully perceive its value. But others, who shall come after us, will have better means of knowl-

edge, or a better mode of thinking, and so will acquire a more clear and comprehensive view of what is so imperfectly known to us. This may be specially true in respect to prophecies. A particular prediction may be so expressed, or it may relate to events of such a nature, that it cannot be well understood before the accomplishment shall explain it. And some important ends may be answered by this very circumstance. Now, in any such case, whether a doctrine or a prophecy is concerned, we are not to look upon the present obscurity as a mark of imperfection in the Bible. A passage, thus involved in obscurity, may be intended for the benefit of the church in some future age; just as some things which were but obscurely known to the people of God under the former dispensation, are made very plain to Christians, being intended chiefly for their benefit.

These points then should be specially remembered; that our finding, after all our efforts, that any part of Scripture is of difficult interpretation, or even unintelligible, is so far from proving the Bible to be imperfect, that it may directly result from its *perfection;* that the sacred volume could not, consistently with the nature of the subjects of which it treats, and with the ends which God designs it shall answer, be so formed, as to be entirely free from obscurity; and that the Holy Spirit may direct men to write, for the benefit of future times, that which may be quite unintelligible now, and which may be of but little use to us, except as a means of rendering us more modest and humble, and more desirous that a day of clearer light may come; and that some things may have been written, which are not applicable and not intelligible to us, but which were intelligible, and of real use, at the time when they were written.

If you think it a proof of imperfection in the Bible, that it *does not exhibit the principles of religion in the common form of human systems;* I ask you how it is in the material creation. Every Christian believes that the work of the Lord is PERFECT — perfect as to its design, and its adaptedness to the ends proposed. But the objects of the natural world are not arranged in a regular order, according to the rules of art. They have no systematic form,

corresponding with what we find in systems of natural science. But does this fact furnish any argument against the infinite wisdom or goodness of the Creator, or against the plan of operation which he has adopted? — There is, however, both in the works and the word of God, a *divine* order and system, far above human.

Thirdly. It is evident that *our belief in the peculiar doctrines of the gospel rests on the firmest basis.*

The common doctrines of natural philosophy are founded on facts which the natural world exhibits, and which we learn through the medium of our senses. These doctrines we confidently believe; and we should think that any man, who refuses to believe them, violates the principles of common sense, and is destitute of a sound understanding. But our faith in *the peculiar doctrines of the Bible* rests on a surer foundation than any of the doctrines of natural science. Our senses and our mental faculties are all fallible. But God is liable to no mistake. The doctrines, therefore, which rest on the authority of his word, are supported by higher evidence, and are more worthy of our belief, than any of the principles of natural philosophy.

It is also evident, that the peculiar doctrines of the Bible rest on a surer basis, than any of the facts which we admit on *the testimony of our fellow men.*

Who has any hesitation in believing, that there were such men as Alexander and Julius Cæsar, and that there is such a place as Rome? But we never saw those men, and have never been in that place. Our belief respecting them rests entirely on testimony. Now, however sure the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. There are indeed many who bear witness to the existence of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Rome. But the testimony of God has more weight than that of ten thousand human witnesses. This must be admitted, unless we deny, either that the Bible is the word of God, or that he is possessed of infinite perfections. For if he has infinite perfections, then he has more knowledge, and more goodness, and more ability and inclination to speak the truth, than any created being, or all created beings

united together. Of course, it would be more unreasonable to suspect him of falsehood, than to suspect all the men on earth, and all the angels in heaven.

We see to what a comfortable conclusion our investigation has brought us, in regard to the foundation of our faith. If all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is, in truth, *his word;* then, whatever doctrine it exhibits respecting the divine character and administration, or respecting the state and prospects of man, has the firmest, best support. The peculiar doctrines of revelation have no other support. As they lie beyond the discovery of our natural reason, we must forever have remained ignorant of them, had they not been made known by the word of God. But as soon as *he* reveals them, we know them to be true.

Fourthly. *We ought to regard the Bible as the source of religious knowledge, and the ultimate standard of our faith.*

As soon as we find out, in any case, what sense the word of God expresses, we have come to the end of our inquiries. Reasoning has nothing more to do, either in the way of proving or disproving. What remains for us is, to believe — and to believe just what is taught, and exactly in the manner in which it is taught. In this way we give reason its proper place; that is, we bring it to sit as a learner at the feet of the heavenly Teacher. We have in this case only one question; and that is, *what the God of truth says.* No man is at liberty to inquire, whether that which God says is true. The simple fact, *that God declares it*, is the highest possible evidence of its truth. When we proceed on this principle, our reason has its proper use. It seeks the truth, and seeks it by suitable and effectual means.

The inspiration of the Bible, regarded as a practical doctrine, relieves us from misconception, doubt and perplexity respecting the most interesting of all subjects. I will illustrate my meaning by examples.

We are exposed to doubt and misconception as to the manner in which the perfections of God will be developed hereafter in a moral government. What particular measures God will adopt in accomplishing the great ends of his benevolence and justice, it is

impossible for us to determine by our own reason. And every attempt to determine it in this way must involve us in error. Our own benevolence and justice are very imperfect, and cannot be considered as standards for these attributes, as they exist in God. His benevolence and justice, under the guidance of his infinite intelligence, must be widely different from benevolence and justice so feeble as ours, and so exposed to be misguided by erring reason. We have, therefore, no means which we can rely upon for information on this subject, but *the word of God.* Here we are definitely taught, that God will display his benevolence and justice, and secure the ends of his moral administration, by *eternal retributions;* that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and that he will bestow immortal happiness on the obedient, and inflict endless punishment on the disobedient. In this way, we obtain real knowledge of the manner in which God will unfold his benevolence and justice; knowledge which can be relied upon; knowledge founded on an infallible revelation. Our persuasion, then, that such is the way in which divine benevolence and justice will operate, has as sure a support as it would have, if we actually witnessed the endless happiness of the righteous, and the endless misery of the wicked. Thus we are freed from doubt and conjecture, and guarded against all the erroneous tendencies of uninstructed reason.

I shall give one more example. It would be impossible for us to discover, by our own reason, the peculiar manner in which the infinite God exists, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; because there is nothing in created beings which could suggest it, or help us to explain it. But God, who knows himself, has taught us, that although there is only one Being possessed of eternal power and Godhead, there are yet three, Father, Son, and Spirit, to each of whom all divine attributes and all personal characteristics belong. Now, if we regard the Bible as divinely inspired, and as infallibly true, we may free ourselves from all doubt and perplexity on this subject, and arrive at entire satisfaction. The fact that what God makes known to us differs from everything of which we are conscious in ourselves, or which we have observed in others, can be

no objection. For we may well suppose that a Being, possessing a nature infinitely above ours, must, in many respects, be different from us; so that when the Bible actually exhibits him as different, we have no occasion to feel the least surprise. But aside from any reasonable presumption of ours, it is clear that, as soon as the inspired volume declares to us anything peculiar in the attributes of God, or in his mode of existence, we have a sufficient foundation for our faith. Nor should our faith waver in the least, because we may be unable to reconcile the doctrine revealed with some other things which we acknowledge to be true. That God has declared it, is perfect evidence of its truth. And they who refuse to believe a doctrine on the ground of this evidence, virtually deny either that the Bible is the word of God, or that God is true; and thus abandoning the true source of knowledge and the standard of faith, they are exposed to wander in darkness and perplexity without end.

To regard the Bible as the source of knowledge and the infallible standard of faith, is the sure way to put an end to *controversy*, and to bring Christians to a general agreement in regard to the principles of religion. For it is certain that those, whose faith agrees with the same standard, will be agreed among themselves. If men differ in respect to the doctrines of religion, it must be because some or all of them fail of conforming to the word of God.

If all Christians, learned and unlearned, should pursue the study of God's word on right principles, and in a right manner, and should come to understand its true meaning; and if they should conform their faith to this perfect standard; the certain consequence would be, a general agreement among Christians in regard to religious opinions. The prospect of such agreement among them must be in proportion to the intelligence, candor, piety and zeal, with which they apply themselves to the study of the Bible. It is not controversy, nor unsanctified learning, but *the diligent, pious study of the Bible*, which is destined to put an end to division and strife in the Christian world.

Fifthly. *Those authors, who deny the inspiration of the Bible,*

are to be regarded as dangerous guides in respect to the principles of religion, and are to be read and studied with great caution.

Let such authors be possessed of ever so much genius and learning; yet, in their representations of the essential doctrines of our religion, they are utterly unworthy of our confidence. Should we think it safe that such men should be intrusted with the office of preaching the gospel? And how can we think it any more safe that they should be intrusted with the work of explaining Christianity by *writing?* They who deny the inspiration of the Bible will, of course, feel themselves at liberty, whenever they find occasion for it, to question the truth of the doctrines and the authority of the laws which it contains. As the prophets and apostles claim divine inspiration, those who do not admit that claim, must regard both prophets and apostles as enthusiasts or impostors. It is a well known fact, that the denial of evangelical doctrines, and the denial of inspiration, generally go together. Priestley and others who agree with him, are obliged, in order to be consistent with themselves, to deny the inspiration of the apostles, and to charge them with ignorance and mistake. Such men will, in all probability, be biassed in their judgment as to the true sense of Scripture, and will be blind to the spiritual glory of the Christian religion. As they are unconvinced and unaffected by the evidence which proves the Bible to be divinely inspired; can it be supposed, that they will rightly discern the nature of the heavenly truths which it contains? And can those, who are desirous of learning the mind of Christ, rely on such men as safe guides to the right understanding of God's holy word? We may indeed avail ourselves of all the information which can be derived from those authors who deny the divine origin of our sacred books. Whatever they teach that is valuable in respect to philology, or any branch of knowledge, we may properly convert to our use in defending and explaining Christianity. But can we rely on them as guides, or appeal to them as authorities, in respect to the holy doctrines of revelation?

Suppose St. Paul were present, and we should ask him, whether he would have us learn the sense of his writings from infidel critics. What might we expect in reply, but the same caution that he gave

to Christians in his day; "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit." And what would *Jesus* say, if we should ask him, whether we may expect to learn the true, spiritual meaning of the Scriptures from those who are blinded by the god of this world, and are enemies to his cross? Whatever advantages may be derived from their erudition, and from the acuteness of their philological investigations, they afford no safe guidance in our inquiries after divine truth. And who has ever resigned himself to their influence, or in any way leaned upon them, without essential injury?

How is it in other cases? Suppose a man, distinguished for genius and learning, entertains principles subversive of civil law and government. Should we choose him as a teacher for those who are to be trained up to be legislators and judges? And suppose a man of distinguished abilities is known to entertain principles pernicious to health and to life. Should we choose him as a teacher in the art of healing, and make his books, containing those pernicious principles, standards in the study and practice of medicine? How then can we look to men, whose religious principles are radically erroneous, for the assistance we need in discovering what are the true doctrines of revelation? Those who are set for the defence of the gospel, may consult writers of the character above described. But whenever we consult them, we should exercise a watchful caution, and be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. We should bear in mind that those, whose writings we are perusing, are strangers to the truth as it is in Jesus, and enemies to the spirit of revelation, and that in everything in which the essence of religion is concerned, they are to be suspected. And if those, who are preparing to be Christian preachers, do not remember this;—if while they are, from laudable motives, conversant with infidel or skeptical writers, they are heedless of the danger which attends them, and are not careful to shield their minds against the poisonous influence to which they are exposed, by self-inspection, and constant prayer; they will certainly be led astray by the fascinations of genius and taste, and will suffer a moral injury, which the most splendid acquisitions and honors can never repair.

Sixthly. *Those who disbelieve the doctrines, or neglect the precepts contained in the Bible, subject themselves to a heavy charge of presumption and impiety.*

To disbelieve the word of God is to impeach his veracity, or, as an apostle expresses it, to *make him a liar.* Be it so, that some things revealed in Scripture are contrary to the deductions of our natural reason. To deny or doubt their truth on this account, would be to set up our weak and erring reason above the infinite understanding of God. And what impious pride and folly would this be! The same may be said as to the *commands* of the Bible. They are the commands of *God;* and they have as high claims to our dutiful regard, as if God now addressed them to us, individually, by a voice from heaven. The doctrine of divine inspiration is then a doctrine of vast import. It impresses upon the Bible an infinite majesty and glory. It invests all its doctrines and precepts and promises with a high and holy authority. To the authority of such a book, all our intellectual and moral powers should render the tribute of the profoundest reverence and submission. And surely God will not hold them guiltless, who either despise or neglect this gift of his mercy.

Seventhly. *How important is the work of explaining and inculcating the word of God, and disseminating it through the world.*

The world lieth in darkness. Man is a wanderer from duty and from happiness. The Bible, and that only, can give him light and guide him in the way to eternal life. And shall those, who have experienced the efficacy of the word of God in converting the soul, — in delivering it from present and future miseries, and in securing everlasting blessings, — be wanting in compassion to their perishing fellow men, or in zeal to make known that gospel which is the saving power of God to all who believe? What work on earth is so momentous, so sacred, or so arduous as this? To publish to the world the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion, would be a high and honorable employment even for angels. But God has seen fit to commit this employment, not to angels, but to men. How honored and happy are they, who are called to this work, and who are striving to accomplish it! But

their labors, already useful in a degree not easily estimated, would be far more useful, if they would abstract themselves from all other pursuits, and give themselves wholly to the business of teaching *the religion of the Bible.* In this way, their office would be associated still more closely with the glory of God, and with the most precious interests of man. In this way, they would become, in the highest sense, benefactors to the world.

The work of preaching the gospel has a natural and intimate connection with the work of circulating the Scriptures. The labors of Christian ministers, and of Bible Societies, are directed to the same benevolent end. God has given the world a volume of divine truth. It is *His word.* And it contains instruction which is infinitely important for every child of Adam. There is no design or enterprise, which Christian benevolence and piety can place above that of giving the volume of inspiration to all men, and teaching all men to understand it. Let Bible Societies, then, and gospel ministers pursue their great object with united and persevering zeal, till, through the mercy of heaven, all men shall hear and obey the gospel, and the world be filled with the knowledge of the Lord.

LECTURE XV.

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD.

ALTHOUGH the sacred writers build their whole system of religious truth and duty on the basis of the *divine existence*, and although they lay it down as the great and essential truth to be believed, *that God is;* and although Moses, Elijah, and Paul, and various other divine messengers wrought miracles or used arguments, for the purpose of making it manifest who was the true God in distinction from idols; yet it is remarkable, that the Scriptures no where formally declare, that there is a God. And although they set forth the nature of the argument by which the being of God is proved, affirming that his eternal existence and perfections are manifested by the things which are made, and that the heavens declare his glory, so that they are without excuse who refuse to worship him; still they never undertake to exhibit the arguments in a philosophic or scientific manner, or to defend the fundamental truth of all religion against the objections of atheism. And although they take much pains to expose the folly, absurdity and wickedness of paying homage to false gods; they nowhere enter into a direct controversy with speculative, or philosophical atheists, and nowhere, according to the method of modern theologians, announce the truth which speculative atheists deny. For this there was evidently no occasion. For however ignorant, vicious, and degraded the people were, to whom the prophets and apostles were sent; yet who among them openly denied, that there is a God? It was an object with prophets and apostles, — an object which they considered to be of infinite moment, as the ministers of Christ do now, — to make men acquainted with the true *character* of the Supreme Being;

while they always assumed the *existence* of a God as an acknowledged truth.

In their treatment of this subject, the sacred writers acted with perfect judgment, and in harmony with the dictates of enlightened philosophy. For the connection between effects and an adequate cause, is an obvious truth, an ultimate fact; to prove which is as unnecessary and impossible, as to prove that we see or hear. The impossibility of proof in this case results, not from the difficulty or obscurity of the point under consideration, but from the circumstance, that nothing is more evident. And any man, who pretends to disbelieve the connection between cause and effect, will perpetually contradict himself. For whenever he sees any change in the objects around him, or is conscious of any change in himself, he will necessarily ascribe it to some cause. He may mistake the cause; still he practically acknowledges the principle, that effects have a cause. We can no more refuse to believe this principle, than we can refuse to believe our original perceptions. Nor can we account for the one, more than for the other. Several modern philosophers have taken pains to illustrate that law of our nature, which leads us to refer every change we perceive, to the operation of an efficient cause. "This reference," says Stewart, "is not the result of reasoning, but necessarily accompanies the perception, so as to render it impossible for us to see the change, without feeling a conviction of the operation of some cause, by which it was produced; much in the same manner, in which we find it to be impossible to conceive a sensation, without being impressed with the belief of the existence of a sentient being."

The remarks of Buffier on this point are brief and satisfactory. The general principle he lays down is this; "wherever order is discovered there also must be found some intelligent being, who is the author of it. Now there is order in the general structure of the universe, and in that particular formation we call the nature of man. There is then an intelligence, that is the cause of this order. This intelligent cause, who is superior to every man, and to the whole universe, and who made them what they are, is what I call God. A God therefore exists. If this proof," he says, "simple

as it is, be not admitted; I do not think it worth while to reason on the subject; for in order to reason, we must have a first principle, that is, a proposition which is allowed to be indisputable, and which is so clear, that it can neither be attacked, nor proved by any proposition of greater perspicuity. Now, there is no principle, that more fully possesses this character, than the following, namely; all which I see, and in which is found a permanent, uniform, and constant order, must have an intelligent Being for its cause. For between a man, who should judge, that a watch which regularly marks the hours, might have existed of itself, and another, who denies that two and two make four, I see no difference as to their absurdity. And if a man should ask to have it proved, that some intelligence, and not chance, formed a watch; all the proof which should be given him, would be, *to remain silent;* — for what could be said on such an occasion, but that the man was out of his senses."

By some it has been thought impossible, that any man should be an atheist. But why should it be thought impossible? That men, through the influence of moral corruption, may become practical atheists, no one can doubt. Nor is there any more reason to doubt, that the understanding of men may be so blinded, and their judgment so warped by pride and false philosophy, and by the practice of vice and impiety, and so abandoned by the Holy Spirit, that they will speculatively disbelieve the existence of a Supreme intelligent cause. Who can limit the errors and absurdities, of which the human mind is capable? How many men have been given up to strong delusion, to believe a lie, and to worship, as gods, the vilest things in nature! The understanding of an atheist must indeed be in a most deplorable condition. If any man's eyes are closed against all the signs and effects of intelligence, which are exhibited in creation; if any man is deaf to the ten thousand voices, both gentle and powerful, which every where and constantly proclaim the power and goodness of God; he must have become an astonishing proficient in folly and stupidity. But there is nothing in all this contrary to the well known principles of the human mind. By constantly retreating from the truth; by resisting its evidence, and

violating its obligations, men in a thousand instances gradually diminish, and finally annihilate, the effect of the clearest evidence, and work their reason into a blind submission to the grossest falsehoods. The Burmans, as a nation, are said to be speculative atheists.

On the question whether the idea of God is innate, I feel myself totally unable to reach any conclusion, without first ascertaining fully the meaning of the phraseology employed. What then is meant by the idea of God? and what by its being innate?

An idea has often been defined, as the object of the understanding — as that which is seen. According to this definition, the object intended is *extraneous* to the mind. Of course, the idea of the sun, is the sun; and the idea of a tree, is a tree; and the idea of God, is God; — for the sun, a tree, and God, are the outward objects which the mind apprehends or sees. But this cannot be the meaning intended; for on this principle, the idea, that is, the object of the understanding, would exist separately from the understanding, and independently of it, — being the same, whatever may be the exercises of the mind, or whether the mind exists or not. Let then the idea of a thing be the image or form of that thing *within* the mind, still distinct from the act of the mind in apprehending it. Let it be the immediate object of that act. In regard to this I ask, what reason there is to think that any such image or form of a thing exists in the mind, distinct from the mind's conception or apprehension of it? Am I conscious of it in myself? When I look at a tree, two things are clear and certain to me; first, that the tree really exists out of the mind and independently of the mind; secondly, that my mind perceives or apprehends it; in other words, that I myself apprehend it. Of this apprehension or perception I am, properly speaking, *conscious*. Of the object without the mind, I am *certain*, though *not conscious*. It is impossible for me to call it in question, without first subverting the very constitution of the mind. To attempt to prove it, would be nugatory; because there is nothing more clear and certain, and of course there is nothing to constitute a proof. No one asks a proof of what he perfectly knows without any proof. In such a case, we say there *is* no

proof; because there is nothing more plain and obvious, than the thing known.

But after settling these two points, first, that the outward object exists; and secondly, that I perceive or apprehend it; I inquire, whether there is anything which comes between the outward object and the act of the mind perceiving it. In the case mentioned, there is indeed the eye, the organ of sight. But this organ, which is the constituted medium through which I see or perceive the object, say, a tree, is not within the mind. Nor is the image of a tree which is painted on the retina, within the mind. The organ of vision is no more within the mind, than the organ of hearing, smelling, or tasting. My question is, whether there is any form or image of the outward object actually within the mind itself, distinct from the mind's perception of the object, and to which the mind looks more immediately, than to the outward object. If any one affirms this to be the case, I ask why he affirms it. If he says it is self-evident; then I ask what he means by its being self-evident. Does he mean that he is conscious of it, as a thing which takes place in the mind? Does he mean that it is a thing which clearly appears in the mind, and which the mind sees and knows to be there, as the immediate object of its thought or perception? If this is his meaning, then I can only desire him to examine the subject carefully for himself. Let him question his own mind, and wait for a fair and honest report. I must say for myself, that so far as I can judge of the case under consideration, the sum total of my knowledge is, that I see or perceive the tree, and that the tree, the object of my perception, really exists, and exists *out of the mind.* These things are clear and certain. But I have no knowledge, either by consciousness, or in any other way, of any image of the tree in the mind, — an image which the eye of my mind looks at, as I look at the image of any object in a mirror. If then the word *idea* is used to signify any such image of the object within the mind, distinct from the act of the mind in perceiving it, it is used to signify what in my view is a nonentity.

But the word idea is at present commonly used to signify the

act of the mind — its thought — its apprehension. To say that the mind has the idea of a tree, is the same as to say that the mind sees or perceives the tree, if present, or, if not now present, that the mind has the thought or conception of it. It is the act itself which the mind puts forth in reference to the tree. According to this, my idea of God is my thought, my conception of God. This is the sense in which the word is now generally understood. If I say, I have in my mind a clear idea, or an obscure idea, of anything, I mean, that I have a clear or obscure thought or apprehension of that thing. If the idea of God is taken in this sense, it will be easy to answer the question, whether the idea of God is innate. I know not that any one holds, that human beings have an innate thought or conception of God; or that such an exercise or act of the mind is born with them. If it be true that *any* act of the mind is strictly innate; it cannot be the idea or thought of *God*. There is not the least reason to suppose, that this is the first thought or idea which arises in the minds of children. Indeed, when I look at the case of young children as it commonly is, I cannot but conclude, that a very considerable exercise of the mental faculties is pre-requisite to any just idea of the Supreme Being, and that a great variety of sensations, thoughts, or conceptions take place in the minds of children, previously to any real thought or conception of God. This I am sure has been the case with us all, so far as our memory can trace back the history of our mental acts. If then the early date of mental acts is to be of weight in determining whether they are innate; there are many ideas which have a stronger claim to be called innate, than the idea of God. The idea of light, and sound, and the ideas or sensations of taste, smell, and feeling, evidently arise in the minds of children, a long time before they appear to be capable of any such idea, as that of a Supreme Being.

But I must advert to another view of this subject, which I think is entitled to more respect. There is that which may properly be called a *constitution* of the mind, which always, in favorable circumstances, leads to the conception of a Supreme Being. Man is so made, that he will, as a matter of course, have an idea

of God. There is manifestly an original, inborn tendency of the mind to religious thoughts. The mind is so made, as to be adapted to receive the impression of a Supreme and perfect Being. This tendency or make of the mind will, in all ordinary cases, develop itself in early life. And if man were free from the influence of moral evil, the idea or thought of God would, doubtless, be waked up in his mind, much earlier, and much more clearly, than is common in our degenerate state. The same degeneracy, which occasions so much ignorance and error respecting God in after life, is a hinderance to any proper conception of him in early childhood. If, at the commencement of our being, we were free from sin, as Jesus was, the idea or conception of God, though feeble and imperfect, would, I think, mingle very early with the other actings of our intellectual and spiritual nature. Now, if this is what is meant by an innate idea of God, there is no ground of controversy left. It is agreed, that the human mind has, from the beginning, such a constitution or tendency. This is the opinion of the best divines. Calvin, for example, speaks of "the seeds of religion which are sown by God in every heart, although they are not cherished, and do not grow, and bear fruit as they ought." He says, too, "that the idea of a Deity, impressed on the mind of man, is indelible;" "that the minds of men are fully impressed with this common principle, which is closely interwoven with their original composition;" and that "some sense of the Divinity is inscribed on every heart." He does not say, there is any actual perception of the Divinity in the mind of a new born child. Now, I have no objection to such expressions of Calvin, and of other writers, if understood with such a latitude as is common. We say familiarly, that man has an innate love of knowledge; that the love of offspring is natural to the human mind; that the sentiment of pity in view of severe suffering, is impressed upon the very constitution of man, and arises spontaneously in his heart; that these things belong to his very nature. Expressions like these point us to those dispositions, or tendencies, which show themselves so uniformly in man, and which evidently result from the nature of the mind. We say of some men, that a taste for

poetry, or for mathematics, is born with them; and if we should say, they have an innate knowledge or discernment of mathematical truth, or of the beauties of nature, or the beauties of poetry — we should mean no more than that they have such a mental constitution, — that their mind is, from the first, so formed, that when their faculties come to be exercised and strengthened, they will actually possess the taste and the discernment spoken of. Accordingly, if I should say, that man has an innate idea of God, I should mean only that he has an intellectual and spiritual nature, which will, in due time, give birth to such an idea, that the very structure of his mind leads to this; and that this is the natural and uniform result of his moral constitution, unless prevented by some extraordinary obstacle. And I ask any one, who chooses to say, that the idea of God is innate, whether he means more than this. And if he means something more, I ask what it is. Some visionary philosophers say, that the real idea of God is latent in the mind at its first formation, and is developed when the mind acts. On the same principle they might say, and some Platonists do say, that all the ideas which man ever has, exist in his mind at first; that all mathematical and moral truths, without any attention or consciousness on his part, are, from the first, formed and laid up in the recesses of his spiritual being, to be called forth for use, as occasion requires. Now, I am very much inclined to inquire for the proof of such a theory. But I am not aware that any proof has been, or can be produced, except the simple fact, that man in the course of his life comes to possess the ideas referred to, or that he does in due time, and by proper means, acquire the knowledge of mathematical and moral truths. According to the notion above mentioned, it would seem, that some of the ideas which lie sleeping in the infant mind, are waked up very easily; while others are buried in such a profound sleep, that it requires hard work for a long time, frequently for years, to rouse them from their slumbers. Now the best which can be said of this theory of innate ideas, taken in the literal, palpable sense just described, is, that it is mere conjecture, founded perhaps on some analogies taken from the material world. All we know is, that the mind exists,

and exists from the first with such faculties and propensities, as are afterwards elicited and made manifest in a course of intelligent, moral action; that the mind has a religious propensity, or such a constitution or nature, as will early develop itself in the conception of a God; in other words, that there is a foundation laid in the very nature of the mind, for the conception and the belief of a Supreme and eternal Being. I might say the same as to the primary and self-evident principles of mathematics. There is in our intellectual nature, a foundation for discerning the truth of these principles. Take one of the maxims or first principles of geometry. As soon as we turn our attention to that principle, and form a clear conception of it, we know it to be true. Indeed, the very conception of the meaning of the proposition carries with it a conviction of its truth. In the exercise of our understanding, we can have no doubt respecting it. To beings constituted as we are, it is self-evident. In like manner, as intellectual, moral beings, we come to entertain the idea of God. And the *very idea*, connected with the accompanying evidence, carries with it a belief of the objective reality. We cannot have in our mind a just conception of an uncreated, perfect Being, without a persuasion that such a Being exists. In the unperverted exercise of our faculties, we cannot doubt his existence.

Such, as it seems to me, is the most unexceptionable manner of presenting the theory of those, who hold that we have an innate idea of God; and this, I think, is all they can make of it. And if the theory is viewed in this light, I would not make it a subject of controversy. The thought of God may undoubtedly precede the use of what is called *speculative reason*. It may be intermixed with our early acquaintance with the works of his hand, particularly his favors to us, — by which his perfections are really, though perhaps unawares to us, suggested to our minds. But it is by no means necessary, that we should always have our eye upon these outward manifestations of God. For he may come to be the direct object of our thoughts, as he exists, separately from his works. In other words, we may sometimes contemplate his existence, without taking his works into view. If it is true, that we do at first rise to the actual idea of God through the medium of

his works; that idea may be afterwards revived in the mind, without any conscious reference to the medium through which we originally obtained it; just as we may have an idea and a sure belief of some higher proposition in Geometry, without recalling the steps of the demonstration which originally convinced us of its truth. This actual conception of God, whether we think of the manner in which we first obtained it or not, is attended with the belief that *he is*, or that our idea of him has an objective reality. In this way, all speculative objections, and doubts, and ratiocinations are excluded, and all is certainty. This view of the subject is attended with important advantages, as it is grounded in truth, and tends to free the mind from the difficulties and perplexities which arise from mere reasoning. And so it becomes peculiarly satisfactory to those, who have found themselves unable to remove the speculative objections, which are urged against the common methods of stating the evidence of the divine existence.

I would make one further suggestion, namely; such a constitution, such an original make of the mind, as will lead certainly to the knowledge of God — such a ground of the idea of God, laid in our very being, bears the stamp of a divine contrivance as clearly, as if we had at our birth the actual conception of God; — nor can this constitution of mind be in any way accounted for, without referring it to the purpose of the Creator, that we should know and worship him.

This evidence of the being of God from the structure of the human mind, particularly its moral constitution, is of great value, and deserves to be much insisted upon. If anything is manifestly adapted to a particular purpose, we conclude that it was designed and made for that purpose. When we see an insect with wings, we at once conclude that it was made to fly. Now the soul of man has a nature which is adapted to religious purposes. It desires a good which is not to be found in the creation. It aspires after an *infinite* good. And this shows that it was made for such a good; in other words, that it was made for the knowledge and enjoyment of God. And this is the same as saying, that the very constitution of the soul of man points to a God, and clearly implies that there is a God. Without a Being of infinite perfection,

the soul could never attain to its appropriate good. Its capacities could never be filled; its higher desires could never be satisfied. Nay, it would be in a state of intolerable desolation and wretchedness.

This evidence of a God is specially manifest from the existence of conscience. Man discerns between moral good and evil. When he does right, his conscience approves, and expects the approbation and favor of the Being who made him. When he does wrong, his conscience condemns him, and points him to a just Lawgiver and Judge, who will punish him for the wrong he has done. Sinners everywhere fear the righteous anger of God. An awakened conscience instinctively speaks of a God, a Supreme Ruler. It has an eye which sees that there is an almighty Being, who will punish evil doers. By perverse reasoning or wicked practice, a man may make himself a speculative atheist. But if his conscience is waked up to right action, it will in a moment confute all his sophistical arguments, and will tell him, in words which he cannot refuse to hear, that there is an omnipotent and righteous God, — will cause him to know the momentous reality. He will see the Holy One of Israel whom he has offended, and will dread the stroke of his justice. Thus the acting of an awakened conscience carries with it a perfect demonstration, that there is a God; just as the opening of the eyes which have been blind, carries with it a demonstration, that there is a sun at noon-day.

This moral evidence of the Being of a God is very simple and direct, and the belief arising from it generally precedes any particular effort of the intellect to frame a speculative argument. "It is an established fact," says Knapp, "that all who believe in the divine existence, are convinced of it before they come to the knowledge of any theoretic argument by which it might be proved. Men in general admit the idea of a God to be true, because it perfectly agrees with the principles of their moral nature, and is demanded by these principles, and not because it is proved by speculative reason." Hence Knapp infers, "that we should begin to instruct children in the knowledge of God at a very early period; as soon indeed as they show the movings of moral feeling."

But as soon as the mind arrives at some degree of maturity, it naturally searches for speculative proof of that which it had before believed from its moral constitution. And this brings us to the more common argument for the divine existence, namely, that which is derived from the works of creation and providence. These works, which are plainly not self originated or self existent, must be referred to an adequate cause, and that cause must have been eternal, and possessed of unlimited wisdom, power and goodness. This argument was suggested by the Apostle Paul, Rom. 1: 20, and has been stated and expanded in various ways by a long list of distinguished writers, and by none more skilfully and impressively, than by Paley in his Natural Theology. This argument is fitted to produce full conviction in the minds of serious and enlightened Christians generally; and it has this special advantage, namely, that every part of the creation, every particular thing, however minute, among the works of God does, by itself, afford clear evidence of an intelligent and divine cause. So that as we pass from one part of creation to another, the argument is constantly accumulating strength, and becoming delightfully overwhelming. This argument, which is plainly and repeatedly asserted by the Scriptures, must carry perfect conviction not only to the philosopher and the devout Christian, but to every intelligent and candid person. And the more extensive and particular our acquaintance is with the different branches of natural science, the more various and powerful will be the evidence of a divine and incomprehensible Being, from whom all created things are derived.

The abstract metaphysical argument from *necessity*, which Dr. Clarke so elaborately sets forth, seems to carry full conviction to some speculative minds. But to me, the argument is not conclusive, except as it runs into the common a posteriori argument, that is, the argument from effects to a cause. The question relates to a particular mode of reasoning. How do you make out the proof, that an eternal intelligent cause exists? You say you prove it, from the *necessity* of the existence of such a cause. To this I agree, but I ask, why the cause *is* necessary. The answer must be, that it is necessary in order to account for the existence of the things which

are made. As there are effects, there must be an adequate cause. It may be said, there would have been and there *must* have been the same eternal, intelligent cause, although no effects had resulted from it. True; but on that supposition, how could we have known it? Could we perceive the necessity of an eternal, divine cause, independently of any visible effects, that is independently of those created things which show to us the necessity of a Creator? It may be said, that God could have made us so, that we could see his existence directly, as we see light. Be it so. In that case the existence of God would stand before us as a certainty. We should see and know that there is a God; just as we know there is light. But should we, in that case, be apt to say, we see and know that there *must* be a God? Dr. Clarke and others have spoken of necessity as the *ground* of the divine existence. But what does this language mean? If we say, that A is the ground of the existence of B, we mean that B is a distinct thing from A, and is dependent upon it. Now is the necessity of the divine existence a thing distinct from the divine existence, and does the divine existence *depend upon* that necessity? And is the divine existence then, after all, a dependent existence? Do you say, it depends upon itself? Well then, is itself different from itself? If not, what can be meant by its being dependent upon itself? I suppose the real meaning is, that it is absolutely *independent;* — that all dependence is excluded; and this is the same as saying, it does not depend upon anything. Why then, after affirming that it is absolutely independent, should we say, it is dependent upon itself? There seems to be in this an attempt to make the existence of God somehow like the existence of created things, which all depend on something else as the real ground or cause of their existence. Whereas the existence of God differs essentially and entirely from all other things in this respect, that while they all have a cause or ground of their existence, which is God, there is no cause of his existence. This being the case, why should we say, he is the ground or cause of his own existence? And what do we do towards explaining his self-existence, by saying that the cause of his existence lies in himself? This

explanation would need to be explained more than self-existence. The self-existence of God must mean, that he exists absolutely and independently. So all must understand it. And it appears strange, that any men of sense should go about to make the divine existence like created existence, which is dependent on a cause. To say that the eternal cause is caused *any* way, even *self*-caused, is absurd; — self-caused, and yet not caused at all!

As to necessity being the ground of divine existence, all I can say is, that the obvious necessity of an eternal, intelligent Being as the cause of created things, is the ground of our *belief* that such a Being exists; or more briefly, the necessity referred to, is the ground, not of the divine existence, but of our belief of it.

Some excellent writers of the Platonic school make much of the argument which they derive from the idea we have of *the most perfect Being, a Being absolutely perfect.* From the fact that we can form in our minds the idea or conception of such a Being, they think it follows, as a certain consequence, that such a Being exists. This argument is grounded on the principle, that all our ideas must have an objective reality; which, in numberless instances, is far from being true. The mere conception or idea of a thing does not prove its existence. The only way in which the argument from the idea of a perfect Being can have any weight, is this, that our being capable of forming such a sublime conception must, like all the other powers and capacities of the soul, have an adequate cause, and that cause must be God. This capacity is, in some respects, of a higher character than any other, and shows that we are fitted by our creation to be religious beings, that is, to know and worship God. As other effects imply an adequate cause, so does the idea of God, and the capacity to form such an idea. The argument then is, that there must be an all perfect Being, not because every thing of which we have an idea must really exist, but because a soul capable of *such* an idea, must be the work of a Being possessed of the highest perfection. And so it comes out to be the argument commonly used to prove that there is a wise and benevolent Creator, from the existence of the faculties of the human soul.

I have now touched upon the chief methods, which have been

made use of to prove the divine existence. One of these methods is specially suited to give satisfaction to one class of men, and another, to another class. The various methods of proof, freed from ambiguity, rightly stated, and candidly understood, contain more or less that is true in principle, and weighty in argument. And surely it affords matter of gratitude and joy, that a doctrine so sublime and momentous, is supported not merely by one conclusive argument, but by such a variety of arguments. So far as they are valid, we ought to welcome them all. If a truth so precious, so wonderful and glorious, can be made evident to our minds in any way, or by any argument, we ought to rejoice. But if it can be proved or illustrated in different ways, and by different considerations, our satisfaction and joy should be proportionally increased.

Here then we are met by an obvious fault in different writers. Some, who hold to the common argument from effects to a cause, will hear nothing of any other mode of reasoning. While some late writers, who make much of the theory of an innate idea of God, show a great dislike to the common method, so skilfully presented by Paley and others, because they are able to discover some speculative difficulties attending it which they cannot satisfactorily obviate — not seeming to be aware, that difficulties of equal magnitude attend their favorite argument. It is indeed true, that the effects which take place before our eyes in the physical world result, in an obvious and important sense, from what philosophers have called second causes; as the tendency of bodies towards the earth, and towards the sun, results from the power of attraction; and as the workmanship displayed by the bee, and the beaver, and other animals, result from the instinctive skill of those animals. But those second causes are themselves effects of a higher cause. The bee makes the honey; but who made the bee? And if it should be said, the bee comes from the parent bee; then who made the parent bee? And who made the first bee? And if any should choose to say, that the first bee resulted from the inherent powers or energies of unorganized matter; then, I would ask, who gave matter such wonderful powers? And if any one should go further and say, that those powers are not to be traced to any

cause, but eternally belong to matter, as its essential properties; I could see no other way, than that a man pretending to hold such an insane opinion, should be left to cure himself by his own reflections, or to remain as he is.

I only add, that men of enlarged and well regulated minds will always receive it as a most welcome fact, that the doctrine of the divine existence is made evident to their minds by different kinds of reasoning; and although they will naturally attach the highest importance to some one argument, they will aim to derive as much benefit as they can from every other.

LECTURE XVI.

THE LANGUAGE RESPECTING THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES EXPLAINED.

My object in this Lecture is, *to analyze the opinions commonly entertained and to explain the language commonly employed respecting the divine attributes.*

We are accustomed to think and speak of God as possessing a variety of attributes, such as wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy. These attributes, though on a partial examination they may appear not only distinct but contradictory, are in truth entirely harmonious, and together constitute a most perfect and glorious character.

This manner of speaking of the Supreme Being is evidently derived from the language in common use respecting the mind of man. Indeed all our particular conceptions of God may be found to take their rise from the conceptions which we form of created intelligencies. These lower conceptions may at least be the occasion of our rising to those higher conceptions which relate to the Supreme Being. It is of course to be understood, that there is, in some important respects, an analogy between us as rational, moral beings, and the God who made us; an analogy plainly implied in those passages of Scripture which teach, that God created man in his own image and likeness — the likeness being unquestionably intellectual, as well as moral.

It would seem then to be our first business, to analyze our conceptions and our language respecting the powers and faculties of the human mind. I shall accordingly set forth, as briefly and satisfactorily as I can, the trains of thought and the conclusions, which I regard as appropriately belonging to the subject.

The human mind is an *agent*. I call it thus because I am con-

scious that my own mind *acts;* and because I see many tokens and effects of the action of mind in others. The mind is an *intelligent* agent. I give it this character, because it acts *understandingly*, or *under the influence of thought;* in distinction from other things which are actuated by physical power. The mind is a *simple*, *spiritual* agent. I denominate it thus, because every thing I know of it leads me to conclude, that it is not a *material* substance, compounded of different ingredients, or separable parts, and is not the subject of the properties of matter. I call the mind a *single* agent, or *one* agent, because I am conscious of my own permanent identity, and do of necessity, according to an original law of my nature, attribute all my actions, designs, thoughts, and affections to the same person, *myself*.

But though the mind is one spiritual agent, we speak of it as having various powers and faculties, such as understanding, memory, will; and various properties, such as wisdom, justice, prudence. What is meant by this representation? Certainly not, that the mind is literally compounded of various parts or ingredients. The language which points out the different faculties of the mind is manifestly derived from different classes of mental operations. For the purposes of reasoning and improvement, it is found necessary to classify the operations of the mind, just as it is necessary to classify the phenomena of the physical world. As in the science of physics, we give general names to particular classes of physical phenomena; so in mental philosophy, we give general names to the different classes of mental phenomena; and then we give names to the mind in reference to those different classes. Action implies an agent, or a being possessed of active power; and every particular class of mental actions implies a correspondent power in the agent. And this is nothing more, than considering the actions of a being as properly belonging to himself, — as the exercises of his own power. The power or faculty, which is supposed in every class of mental actions, we denominate from the nature, the object, or the relations of that particular class.

"Does not every man know," says Buffier, "that it is the same

soul which produces various operations? And according as we find more or less difference in those operations, do we not suppose a greater or less number of different faculties whence they proceed? — although these different faculties are but one and the same substance, which is the soul." "All that we call different faculties of the soul, strictly speaking," says another writer, "mean nothing else but the different acts and operations of one and the same rational principle; which has different names, according to the objects upon which it acts, and the manner of its acting."

A few examples will make this process in fixing the powers and faculties of the mind sufficiently plain.

The mind *thinks*. Considering it simply in this light, we say it has *intelligence*, or *the power of thinking*. Again, the mind contemplates various truths. With reference to this, we say the mind has a *speculative* or *intellectual* faculty. But besides the bare contemplation of things, which we refer to intellect, the mind has *emotion* or *feeling* towards various objects of contemplation, and acts in the way of loving, hating, desiring, willing, choosing. Exercises like these we call by the general name of *affection* and *volition*, and we refer them to the mind as possessing the *faculty* of loving, desiring, and willing. In correspondence with this general classification of mental operations, we say the mind has the faculties of understanding, affection and volition.

On the same principle we make subdivisions of our mental actions and faculties. I shall specify only two or three. The mind recalls what is past. This we call recollection; and we ascribe it to the mind as having the *faculty of memory*.

Another operation of the mind is comparing its own actions with the moral law, approving or disapproving them, and referring them and itself to the tribunal of a Supreme Judge. With reference to this kind of exercise, we say the mind has the power or faculty of *conscience*. In like manner, pity or compassion is spoken of as a particular kind of mental operation. All we know of the mind directly, is its action. Our conceptions and propositions respecting the nature, the attributes or faculties of the mind, are by way of inference or implication.

The same general principle must regulate us in analyzing the language commonly employed respecting the *divine* attributes. In the first place, we must guard, with sacred care, against imagining, that the divine mind is made up of different parts or ingredients; and must conceive of God, as a single being, one pure and perfect Spirit. Next we must bear in mind that "the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things which are made."

God performs a great variety of works. But what would be the consequence, if these divine works, though observed by us, should remain unclassified? Plainly the same in theology, as would take place in natural philosophy, if the proper objects of that science should remain without classification; that is, our knowledge would be confined to single things, or unconnected facts. In that case, we could have no general terms, and of course no instruments of reasoning and science. Every individual object and every individual appearance and event must have an appropriate name. Thus encumbered, human intercourse would be exceedingly difficult and imperfect, and human knowledge comparatively stationary. The same inconvenience would be felt in religion, if the works and manifestations of God should remain without classification.

In forming a proper classification of the works of God, and thence deducing his attributes, we proceed in the following manner. We first observe several divine works, which, in some important respects, resemble each other; and then, with reference to that point of resemblance, we give them a common name. This name becomes the sign of all those works, and is used to denote them.

Again: We observe certain works of God, or certain views of those works, which have no necessary connection with moral character, — which, as now considered, do not bring God into view as an object of love or complacency. They are, we say, operations of mere power or intelligence; and considered by themselves, they might be performed by a being possessed of sufficient strength and understanding, whether he were good or bad. Take the cre-

ation of the world; the motion of the heavenly bodies; thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. Leave out, as you may, all consideration of the end to be answered by these works. They are, in fact, intended for good — they are designed and adapted to answer desirable ends. Still there is no necessity that you should always consider them in that light. You may view them in their first and most obvious appearances, abstracted from their ultimate design. You may take them into view by themselves, having nothing to do with the inquiry, whether they are intended to accomplish a good or bad purpose. These divine works, regarded in such a light, are easily distinguished from those which directly display and which are considered as displaying moral character, and may very conveniently be marked by an appropriate name. They may be called *natural* or *physical* operations. With reference to such operations, or with reference to the operations of God considered merely in this light, God is said to have *natural perfections*, particularly power and knowledge. These, you will bear in mind, are called natural perfections, because a display of them, simply considered, does not necessarily bring moral character into view, or because we may contemplate them separately from the consideration of moral character.

But we observe certain works of God, which exhibit him to us as an *object of complacency*. These works are either such in themselves, or evidently designed for such an end, that we are led, by the constitution of our nature, to ascribe them to a *good* being, that is, to consider the author of them as *benevolent*. The operations of God, which are of such a description, we denominate *moral* operations; and with a view to them, we consider God as possessing *moral perfection*.

What moral perfection is in God, we determine in substantially the same manner, as we determine the moral qualities of men. Human actions and character are contemplated with reference to the moral law, as the standard. If they are capable of being compared with this, and of being considered as conformed or not conformed to it, they are said to have a *moral nature*. If not capable of this, they are not of a moral nature. It is indeed

true, that neither the acts nor the character of God can, properly speaking, be considered as under law. Still that which we call moral excellence in God, is the character which he exhibits as the Author of the law, though not as its subject. There is, moreover, a real likeness between the moral excellence of man, consisting in obedience to the law, and the moral excellence of God, displayed in giving and executing the law; a likeness in kind, though not in degree.

With respect to this distinction between natural and moral perfection, which is of extensive use in theological discourse, there is a question which I shall touch upon in this place, not so much for the sake of answering it, as of giving a farther illustration of the advantages of this kind of analysis. The question is not, whether any being really exists, who possesses infinite power and knowledge without goodness. For we know that there is only one almighty and omniscient Being; and that his word and his works prove him to be good. Nor is it the question, whether there ever has been any operation and manifestation of natural perfection in God, without a manifestation, at the same time, and in the same act, of moral perfection. But the question is, whether the moral perfections of God can, *by a logical process*, be deduced from his natural perfections. It relates merely to our *manner of reasoning*. Suppose, without knowing that God possesses moral perfection, you knew merely that he is *omniscient* and *omnipotent*. Could you from this certainly conclude that he is *good?* You could not derive this conclusion from the fact, that knowledge and power, in all other instances, have been united with moral excellence. For the world every where affords the most palpable instances of beings possessed of intelligence and power, who are destitute of moral virtue. We see then that there is no necessary connection between moral virtue, and such a degree of knowledge and power as exists in man. And if goodness has no necessary connection with knowledge and power existing in a lower degree; how could we, independently of all other evidence, prove its necessary connection with knowledge and power existing in a higher degree? Do we find, that virtue among our fellow men has a more neces-

sary or certain connection with a higher degree of intelligence and power, than with a lower? Do men, who have been destitute of goodness, always become good, or make any approach towards goodness, by the increase of their knowledge and power? And does it appear, that beings possessed of higher intelligence and power, have been less accessible to sin, than those of a lower order? If not, then what reason have we to think that an increase of knowledge and power to a higher degree, than any which is found in creatures, would of itself have any certain influence to change a sinful temper? It may be said, that if a being has infinite intelligence and power, he must be out of the reach of all motives to do wrong, and every thing must operate as a motive to the exercise of goodness. Granted, if that being has *a benevolent heart;* but not otherwise. It may be said, that such a being must know the best scheme, and be able to execute it; and that he must therefore choose that scheme as most gratifying to his feelings. I grant that he must do so, if he is *benevolent.* The conclusion rests entirely upon the assumption, that he *is* benevolent. It takes for granted the point in question. For unless you admit that this omniscient and omnipotent being is benevolent, the good of others would not gratify his feelings, and he would not be disposed to choose a scheme suited to secure that good. If he is *malevolent*, he will be gratified with the misery of others, and will use his knowledge and power to promote it. In that case, the possession of such knowledge and power, as would raise him above the possibility of injury from others, would only enable him to gratify his malevolent feelings, by doing more hurt. If destitute of benevolence, no motives which could come before his mind, would have any power to excite him to do good.

After all, then, the real question is a question of *fact.* Have we clear evidence, that moral excellence is inseparably joined with God's natural attributes? The answer is obvious. The works of God furnish constant and overwhelming evidence that he is benevolent. Those very works which display his intelligence and power, do invariably, considered in their connection and design, display his goodness also.

But besides knowledge and power, there are other perfections, for example, eternity, and immutability, which we call natural; because the simple fact of God's possessing them does not, by itself, determine his moral character. You will remember that I am speaking merely of the method of our *reasoning* — the fact being perfectly clear, that the divine eternity and immutability are the eternity and immutability of infinite goodness, as well as of infinite power and knowledge. We are so happy as to know for a certainty, that all the natural perfections of God are inseparably united with infinite moral excellence, and, together with that, constitute a character supremely glorious.

In contemplating the particular moral attributes of God, we find that *love*, or *benevolence*, is the most prominent, and that there is the utmost propriety in the inspired declaration, that "God is love." The works of God in creation and providence, and the measures of his moral government, all tend to good — all are either directly or indirectly productive of happiness. And when we see good produced, or a designed tendency to good, we ascribe it to goodness or benevolence in the Author.

It is a question which deserves consideration, whether benevolence is to be regarded as a general attribute of God, comprising or pervading justice, mercy, truth, and other moral perfections — they all being only instances of benevolence. I have introduced the question chiefly for the sake of showing that the method above suggested, of analyzing the subject, may afford an easy solution. Just glance at it then, as it respects divine justice. Is the justice of God in punishing sinners an exercise of real benevolence? Does benevolence, taken in the large sense, lead to it? Look now at those divine acts from which we get our notions of justice. Are those acts beneficial in their tendency? Is their influence salutary? I ask not whether it is in all cases salutary to the particular persons who are punished. But is it salutary to the kingdom of God? Does it, on the whole, tend to good? If it really tends to good, it is so far attributable to benevolence. Now, it cannot be doubted, that every act of justice does tend to promote the order and happiness of the universe, and, in that sense, is

clearly an act of benevolence. Magee asserts, I think incautiously, "that the principle of *pure benevolence*, if followed up, must exclude punishment in all cases whatever, the very notion of punishment being incompatible with pure benevolence." I shall not inquire now what this excellent author intends by pure benevolence; for he may perhaps mean to suggest the idea of a benevolence which is exclusive of justice. But, if the execution of a just punishment upon transgressors tends to the welfare of the universe, why does not God exercise his benevolence in this way, as really as in any other way of doing good? To prove that divine justice is, in its nature, not only distinct from benevolence, but exclusive of it, you must point out some instance, in which the exercise of justice does not conduce to the general good. For if all the acts of divine justice are conducive to the general good, then justice harmonizes with benevolence, and benevolence with justice. It is at least clear, that justice is an attribute which belongs to an infinitely benevolent God.

Our specific notions of divine justice are obtained in the following manner. We observe certain acts of the divine government, which respect the character and conduct of those who are the subjects of the divine law. Men are rewarded or punished *according to their deeds*. Such a procedure, which we denominate *just*, we ascribe to a disposition in the mind of God, which we denominate *justice*. Thus we make a particular class of divine acts, and designate them, and the character of God with reference to them, by the name of *justice*.

The same as to *mercy* or *compassion*. We observe certain acts of God, which tend to relieve and comfort persons in a suffering condition. Such acts are ascribed to a disposition in the divine mind, which, from an affection of our own mind leading to similar acts, we denominate mercy, pity, compassion.

The *grace* of God. Divine favor is granted to the *ill-deserving* — to those whom justice might visit with punishment. Favor, thus undeserved, we call *grace*, and ascribe it to an attribute of God, to which we give the same name.

In many cases the words mercy and grace are used interchange

ably; and for the obvious reason, that all men are regarded as both ill-deserving and miserable, and so are the *objects* of both *grace* and *mercy*.

Holiness of God. This seems to express moral excellence in general. All the conduct of God is right; perfectly suited to the relations he bears towards his creatures. He is himself perfectly free from moral evil, and perfectly opposed to it in others. And he is not merely free from moral evil, but possessed of the contrary to an infinite degree. He is therefore called holy.

The *wisdom* of God. We observe that the acts of God in creation and all the measures of his government, are *designed* and *adapted* to accomplish good and important ends. With reference to this characteristic of the conduct of God, we say he possesses infinite wisdom. Accordingly wisdom, with reference to God and other holy beings, is generally understood to imply both *intelligence* and *goodness*.

Sovereignty of God. The acts of God result from his own infinite wisdom, and not unfrequently in opposition to the wisdom of his creatures — they are conformed to his own will, not to their will. There are many cases, where we are unable to understand the particular reasons of his conduct, and where our will would dictate a different course from his. With reference to this circumstance, we ascribe to God a righteous sovereignty.

I have now given sufficient examples of the manner, in which the common language and conceptions of men relative to the divine attributes may be explained. Whenever they speak intelligibly of different attributes of God, they refer to different classes of his operations, and to their different characters and relations. And this is evidently conformed to the manner of the sacred writers, who, in numberless instances, speak of the acts of God in creation and providence, as *powerful*, *holy*, *just* and *good*, and trace them to correspondent perfections in him.

If then, at any time, we find obscurity or perplexity in our views of the divine attributes, or in the language commonly used respecting them, it is best to resort directly to the divine acts. We shall obtain clear conceptions of the attributes of God, so far

as we have clear conceptions of the manner, circumstances, and relations of his works. And in this way, we may not only *enlarge* but *qualify* our views of the divine perfections. We observe that God bestows upon mankind, sinful as they are, numberless blessings; thus manifesting his benevolence and compassion. Has he then, we may ask, mere benevolence and compassion, exclusively of other moral attributes, particularly the attribute of justice? To determine this we look further, and observe terrible punishments inflicted upon the wicked in the present world, and more terrible threatened in the world to come; and we are taught by our own moral sense, and by the Scriptures, to consider these punishments as just, and to ascribe them to an attribute of God which we call justice. Or, we may first notice acts of divine justice, and proceed from these to acts of divine goodness and mercy. In the same way we proceed to other operations of God, which enable us still further to enlarge and qualify our conceptions of his character. And if our intellectual and moral faculties are properly awakened, and employed with becoming diligence on the subject, we may become more and more acquainted with the whole range of the divine perfections; and we may always be sure that our apprehensions are right, so far as we look with a humble, docile spirit, to the *conduct* of God, as set before us in his word and providence, and conform our views of his character to the actual manifestations which he makes of it in his dispensations.

In this way we may, from time to time, determine how far we have obtained a real knowledge of the moral character of God, and may be furnished with a proper and convenient test of the correctness of the opinions, which we or others entertain on this subject. The only safe principle is, that our opinions and expressions relative to the attributes of God, should be modified and regulated by what we know, from Scripture and observation, of his works and dispensations. As the most pernicious errors in religion arise from wrong views of the divine perfections; such a reference to the divine proceedings, as I have now suggested, would be of vast consequence in exposing and confuting those errors.

It is indeed true, that this method of analysis, in some in-

stances, becomes difficult, because the divine operations are very complex, and it is hard to classify them. But it is equally so in philosophy. This evinces no defect in the principle. It only shows the imperfection of our knowledge.

Let me add one more remark, namely, that various and even all divine attributes may be exhibited in one and the same operation. Take a single example, the conversion of a sinner. There is in this a display of divine *power;* because an effect is produced which is great and important, and above the ability of men or angels. There is a display of divine *knowledge;* because the event is of such a nature, that the Author of it must know the heart and all the circumstances of the sinner. There is divine *wisdom;* because the event is not only good in itself, but is designed and adapted to promote the most desirable ends. There is *benevolence;* because the event secures happiness to the converted sinner, and to the kingdom of God. There is *justice* too; because the event takes place purely on the ground of the atonement of Christ, by which the justice of God was displayed and the penalty of the law answered. There is *mercy;* because the object of divine favor is miserable; and there is *grace;* because the object is ill-deserving. There is divine *holiness;* because the event shows God to be "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and to be an immutable friend of holiness. And there is *sovereignty;* because the conversion of this sinner, rather than another, is the dictate of the will of God, not the will of creatures; and the particular reasons of it lie beyond our ken.

Many instances might be adduced, in which various divine perfections are clearly manifested in the same event; in other words, in which the same event exhibits those various circumstances, relations and aspects of the divine operations, from which we derive our notions of various divine attributes. And if, with a pure mind, we could perfectly know all the relations, circumstances and tendencies of things, we should undoubtedly see that every operation of God really exhibits all his perfections; so that constantly, in all his works, both in the natural and moral world, we should behold and admire the whole assemblage of excellencies which constitute his glorious character.

LECTURE XVII.

MAN'S UNLIKENESS TO GOD.

In the preceding Lecture it was suggested, that there is an obvious similitude between our intellectual and moral nature, and the nature of God; and the discussion was conducted on the principle that such a similitude exists. The Scripture representation evidently implies this. And our own experience will satisfy us, that our conceptions of the attributes of God, imply a consciousness that we possess attributes of a similar kind. Without the conscious exercise of such attributes, how could we form an idea of them in any other being? How could we, for example, have a conception of knowledge and benevolence in God, unless we had some degree of knowledge and some feeling of benevolence in our own minds?

But this likeness of the human mind to the divine has its limits. As there is a *similitude* between us and God, there is also a *dissimilitude*. Accordingly while the Scriptures teach, that man was made in the image or likeness of God, they also teach that no one in heaven or earth can be likened to him. The truth is that, in some respects, man is like God, but, in other respects, exceedingly unlike him. Our *unlikeness* to God, which is our present subject, appears chiefly in regard to *the mode of his existence, the nature and extent of his attributes, and the manner in which his attributes are manifested in his works.*

1. We are unlike God as to *the mode of his existence.*

Created beings really exist. Creation is not an illusion — an appearance without a reality. The things which are made have a real, substantial and permanent existence. But as to the mode and circumstances of their existence, they are exceedingly different

from their Creator. *Their* existence is derived and dependent. They *are*, because God has *caused* them to be. It is true also, that they have existed only for a time. Before that, they had no being. They were nothing. In the work of their own creation they had no concern but to be created. And as they were dependent for the commencement of their existence, so they are for its continuance. They could no more exist now without God, than they could have come into being without him. If he should withhold his agency and no longer cause them to continue in being, they would cease to be. They will exist forever, because God will forever uphold them in being.

This state of dependence belongs alike to all created beings. The highest are as far from possessing an independent existence, as the lowest; the most powerful, as the feeblest; the archangel, as the infant. Nor do creatures grow less dependent, or make any approaches towards independence, by their long continuance in being. After they have existed thousands and millions of years, they will hang upon the power of God as much as they do in this childhood of their being.

In all these respects, God's mode of existence is widely different from ours. He exists in and of himself. It was not owing to any cause whatever, that he eternally existed. He was not the cause of himself, though he was of all other things. And as there was nothing which caused his existence at the beginning, so there is no cause of his continuing to be. His existence is, in all respects, without a cause. We can account for the existence of other beings, by referring to God as the cause that produced them. But if you ask, what was the cause of God's existence? I answer, it had no cause. This perfect, absolute mode of existence belongs to one Being only. It is so superior to our mode of being, that there is no language which can adequately describe it. All that God has done to represent it to us, is to say, I AM THAT I AM.

It is also true, that the *powers* and *faculties* which belong to us are entirely dependent. We should have no reason, no memory, no power of thought or feeling, if God should cease to uphold these faculties of our minds. And so it will be with us forever.

But the attributes of God are perfectly independent. If you ask, how we can account for it that God is wise, and powerful and good, instead of being ignorant, and weak and wicked; I answer, we cannot account for it. To account for anything is to trace it to an adequate cause. But God's being wise, and powerful and good does not depend on any cause.

Again; it inseparably belongs to created beings, that they exist *in time.* Their whole being, however long continued, may be measured by time. We began to live at such a time, and we have lived so many years. These years measure our existence. — How old art thou? Your answer will show the length of time since you began to be. Our existence after death may be measured by time, as really as before. It is said indeed, that we shall go into eternity. The meaning is, that we shall go into a *state* that will be eternal, or endless. But that endless state of being will always be measured by time. Adam, we suppose, is nearly six thousand years old; that is, it is nearly six thousand years since his creation. By and by we shall be as old as Adam now is. But this will be mere childhood, compared with what will follow. After a while we shall look back to the time of our birth, and shall speak of being ten thousand years or ten millions of years old, as familiarly as we now speak of being twenty, or forty, or seventy years old. Such is our mode of being.

But how is it with God? When did he begin to exist? Never. His existence has no such relation to time, as our existence has. It cannot be measured by time. You cannot say, God was ten thousand years, or ten millions of years old, when he created the world. This would make him like a created being, and would plunge us into the absurdity of holding, that before the period mentioned, he did not exist; in other words, that there was a time when there was no God; from which it would certainly follow, that there never would be a God. God inhabits *eternity*, not time. Time is not attributable to him. We cannot say, God is older now than he was at the creation. The time which has passed away since the creation, relates to the things which are made, not to him that made them. And all the years which will

pass away in future time, and which will continually increase our age, will not increase God's age. What we call age does not belong to God. Our minds are so constituted, and we are so accustomed to measure created existence by time, that we find it impossible to form any clear and adequate idea of this peculiar mode of God's existence. We know that his being is not measured by time, as ours is. Here we stop. Or if we try to go farther, and to think out what this peculiar, this absolute mode of being is, we soon discover the littleness and weakness of our minds, and our attempts end, or ought to end, in profound astonishment and wonder; and we exclaim, "who in the heavens can be compared to the Lord?" "Who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"

But there is still another point of unlikeness. We learn from the Scriptures, that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that each of these is a partaker of the divine nature, and possesses all divine perfections; that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God; — not three Gods, but one God. The sacred writers also teach, that all personal properties, relations and acts belong to each of these three. They speak of each as a person — of one as really as the other. There is as much evidence from the Bible that the Son of God is a person, as that the Father is a person. And there is the same kind of evidence that the Holy Spirit is a person. And if those who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, represented these three as persons; it is proper for us so to conceive of them, and so to speak of them. And yet there is nothing revealed more plainly and decidedly, than that there is only one God. Thus following the guidance of the Scriptures, we believe and maintain the doctrine of the Trinity, which means *three in one — three persons in one God.* And the sacred writers interweave this peculiarity in the mode of the divine existence, with the whole work of redemption, and with the work of creation and providence also, the Son of God being associated with the Father in creating, preserving and governing the world, as well as in redeeming it.

But what is there in man or angel, that resembles this peculiar-

ity in the mode of the divine existence? It is often the case, that three or more human persons are united together in a society, and in the accomplishment of some object. The union is sometimes very intimate and close. The persons thus united have a common interest, and are joined together in a common affection; so that, in a limited sense, they may be said to be *one* — one in affection, in object, and in interest. In this sense Christians ought to be one; and their union should in this way resemble the union between the Father and the Son. But then the followers of Christ, though united in this manner, are *distinct beings*, as well as distinct persons. They have a moral likeness to one another, but not one and the same individual nature. The nature of each belongs strictly and truly to him only, not to the other. Paul's intelligent nature was not Peter's, or John's, any more than his body. Peter had an intelligent nature of his own entirely distinct from that of Paul and John. They were *three persons*, *three men*, *three intelligent beings*, each having his own distinct and separate existence, his own body, his own mind, his own heart, his own agency. They were as much three distinct men, three distinct individual beings, as though no union of affection or interest had existed between them. Here then the resemblance entirely fails. The three persons in the Godhead are not three distinct beings, — they are not three Gods. Jehovah is one God, not three Gods. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not only united in affection and interest and action, but are partakers of the same individual divine nature. The divine nature of the Father is, strictly, the divine nature of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The divine perfection of the Son is identically one and the same with the divine perfection of the Father. The same individual perfection is the perfection of the three. They have not three similar natures — three Godheads which are alike. But the Godhead of the three is one and the same Godhead. So that it becomes perfectly evident, that there is no created being in heaven or earth that can, in this respect, be likened unto God. And every attempt to find out something among men, that has a strict analogy to the divine Trinity, must end in disappointment and confusion. Those who go upon the principle that there must be some analogy,

and that no Trinity in the Godhead can be admitted which is a departure from all analogy, or is entirely different from anything found among created beings, will certainly err from the truth. For nothing is more obvious, than that the doctrine of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as set forth in the Scriptures, is as distant from all analogies found among creatures, as the east is from the west.

Now if it is reasonable to reject the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, because there is nothing like it among created beings; it is just as reasonable to reject the doctrine of God's existing without a cause, and without a beginning. For you have the same reason to disbelieve God's uncaused and eternal existence, as to disbelieve the teachings of the Bible respecting the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God's uncaused, eternal existence is as distant from all analogy — as unlike to anything of which you are conscious in yourselves, or which can be found among created beings, as his existing in three distinct persons. And who that has confidence in the teachings of his word can doubt, that *his existing as a Trinity does as truly belong to the absolute perfection of his nature, as his existing without a beginning and without a cause?*

Let me add, that as there is a striking peculiarity in the mode of God's existence in the respects above mentioned, it is natural to expect that he will exhibit other peculiarities. It is not my present object to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, but taking it just as it stands in the word of God, to show that a mode of existence so singular, so incapable of explanation, and so confounding to the littleness and imbecility of our minds, is nothing incredible. Peculiarities, mysteries, attributes, which distance all analogies and baffle all attempts at explanation, and which infinitely surpass the power of the human intellect, are certainly to be looked for in regard to that glorious Being, whose name is Jehovah. And if he should be pleased to make known other peculiarities of his nature, as mysterious and incomprehensible as those which we have already noticed, we ought implicitly to believe them; and in thus implicitly believing whatever the eternal God is pleased to reveal to us, we do what is most befitting rational beings. For there can be no more suitable exercise of reason than to believe, without hesi-

tation, and with implicit confidence, whatever God shall declare. It becomes us, as rational beings, to say from the heart, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." All the incomprehensible doctrines taught in the word of God should find a ready reception in our waiting minds. And as our knowledge of God increases, we expect to discover new mysteries in his character, and to find the incomprehensible doctrines already taught us, still more evidently incomprehensible. And is it not clear, that contemplating and receiving doctrines so high, so profound, so transcendent, will produce a humbling sense of our ignorance and littleness, and will, at the same time, beget such sentiments of devout reverence and astonishment, as will enlarge and ennoble our minds, and fit us for the sublimer worship of the world above, — where we shall see more and more clearly, through endless ages, what reason we have to exclaim, who in heaven or earth can be compared to the eternal God?

I proceed now, in the second place, to illustrate our unlikeness to God in regard to the *nature* and *extent* of his attributes.

Turn your thoughts then to the *power* of God. According to the Scriptures, he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth. He is able to accomplish whatever his infinite understanding conceives, and his infinite benevolence desires. See what the omnipotence of God has accomplished, and does accomplish continually. Think of the power to create — the power to cause a real existence, which before was not. Once there was no sun, no moon, no planets or stars, no created being. God was, and God only. Consider now the power which brought the vast universe into being, — which gave permanent existence to the bodies around us, to worlds so numerous, so vast, so distant from us and from one another — to a universe, in comparison with which this world of ours is but a drop to the ocean. Think too of the power necessary to *uphold* the sun, planets and stars — the millions of systems spread through boundless space! What is the power of man compared with the power of the Creator and Preserver of this amazing universe? Who has an arm like God? No words can express the distance between the power which belongs to us, and the omnipotence of

God. If I should say, it is as a particle of dust to ten thousand worlds; I should still fail of setting forth the disparity.

But the power which we possess is exceedingly unlike to God's, not only in degree, but in its nature and circumstances. Our power is constantly and entirely dependent on the will of God. We cannot move, or speak, or think, without God's constant agency. We have but little power — so little in comparison with God's power, that it is not worthy to be mentioned. And even this little power of ours is every moment dependent on God's pleasure. But the power of God depends not on any other being. It is absolutely his own.

Again; God, in the exercise of his power, acts without anything like human effort or labor. To him there is nothing difficult, nothing hard to be done. He accomplishes the greatest work as easily as the least. Had he pleased, he could have begun and finished the work of creation in an instant. He could have brought the vast universe into being so suddenly, that there would have been no interval of time between the commencement and the completion of the work — not a moment between the existence of millions of worlds, and of the nothing which preceded. Compared with this, what is the power of man, who is obliged to labor so hard to do his little task! — In the exercise of *our* power, we soon grow weary. The beginning of labor may be pleasant, but after a little time it becomes tiresome. If we put forth great efforts, if we task our powers to the utmost, we are soon exhausted, and require rest. How different is it with the ALMIGHTY, who sustains and moves ten thousand worlds, and does it continually, and will do it forever, without fatigue or need of rest! It requires a wonderful exercise of power for God to do what he does in *this world of ours*, — to cause the daily and the annual motions of the earth, to direct the seasons, to produce thunder and lightning, tempests and earthquakes, and to sustain and govern so many millions of minds — to do all this day and night, through the year, and from year to year, and from century to century, without a moment's intermission. But he continually performs a work ten thousand times as great, as what he does in this world. And though it makes us faint and weary

even to think of such mighty and incessant action; yet God "fainteth not, neither is weary."

There is one thing more to be noticed. We have power to act in only one place at the same time. But God has power to act at the same time in all parts of this world, and in other worlds without number — worlds which are so far from us and from each other, that no number can express and no finite mind conceive the distances. *Different men* have power to act in different places, one here and another there, at the same time. But it is not one God who exerts his power in this place, and another in that place, — one God in this world, another in the sun, another in each of the planets, another in each of the stars. It is one and the same God, who at the same time puts forth his power here, and there, and everywhere through the immeasurable creation.

This unlikeness of man to God appears also in respect to *knowledge*.

The intelligence with which we are endued is always very limited, and at the beginning of our life is scarcely discernible. And though we may grow in knowledge forever, the objects of knowledge are such in their nature and extent, that they will always be immeasurably above us and beyond us, so that it will always be true, that "we are of yesterday and know nothing." But the knowledge of God is without limits, and is incapable of being enlarged. It was as extensive and as perfect from eternity, as it is now. God does not investigate subjects, and pursue processes of reasoning to discover truth, as we do. God never *learns* anything; because there is nothing which he does not already perfectly know. All that has taken place since the creation, all the operations which have been going on, all the disclosures which have been made in the vast and complicated system of the universe, consisting of parts so numerous, so multiform, and so distant, have added nothing to the knowledge of God — have not given him one new conception. And all that will take place hereafter — the revolutions in our world, the life and death of all the millions of human beings in future ages, the final conflagration, the resurrection of the dead, the proceedings of the great day, the

whole future history of heaven, and of hell, and of all worlds — which will communicate an inconceivable amount of knowledge to the minds of created beings — knowledge of things entirely new, and clearer knowledge of what they began to know before — all this will communicate no new knowledge, and no additional clearness of knowledge, to the mind of God — no, not a single thought or conception which he had not from eternity. Where each one of us shall stand at the judgment day — where we and our friends and all our fellow men shall be, and what we shall be, ten thousand years after the judgment day, is as perfectly known to God now, as it will be then. Many self-deceived sinners will doubtless be greatly surprised to find what their condition is in the world to come. And probably many humble, doubting Christians will be surprised to find in what a blessed condition they are beyond the grave. But none of these events will be new or surprising to God. All those things, which are dark and mysterious to us, are perfectly plain and clear to the divine mind. Our eye cannot see through the clouds and darkness often spread over us and around us. But God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. We cannot know any one thing half so perfectly, as God knows all things.

Our minds are such, that we can properly attend to but one thing at a time. And to do what is necessary in regard to the variety of objects from time to time presented before us, we are obliged to dismiss one subject and one set of thoughts, to make room for others. As our minds are so small, and can contain so little at once, there is a necessity for a constant change. We are obliged to do at different times, what a mind, freed from this narrowness, might do at the same time. Our knowledge, though it may be considerable in the final amount, is all cut up into parts. And we are in the actual possession and exercise of only a little part at any one time. We think of one thing now, and of another afterwards. Thus we attempt to make up, by change of mental action, the deficiences which arise from the smallness of our capacities. In all these respects how unlike are we to God! He thinks of all things, and knows all things, at the same time, and at all times. He never dismisses one subject or one thought to make

room for others. No idea ever passes out of his mind, none ever comes into it. Not that his mind is unemployed and quiescent, as pagan philosophy sometimes represents. The mind of God is always active, and active in a manner and degree infinitely above any created mind. Mental action in us, being the consequence of our limited faculties, must always be marked with imperfection. But God thinks and knows in a manner correspondent with his absolute perfection. We are conscious of a degree of activity in our minds, when we contemplate a single object, and have a few clear, distinct thoughts. How infinitely superior is intellectual action in the mind of God, who sees all things past, present, and future at once. In him there is one act of boundless intelligence — one all comprehensive, infinite, unchangeable thought — unchangeable not from its inactivity, but from its unlimited perfection, — the act of the divine intelligence being in proportion to the boundlessness of the divine mind, and the boundlessness of the objects of knowledge.

I shall mention only one more point of dissimilitude between our knowledge and the knowledge of God. Although we know our own thoughts and feelings directly, by an inward consciousness; we have no faculty which enables us to look immediately and directly into the minds of our fellow creatures; — or even to know that they have minds, except by means of external signs. Here we find one of the prerogatives of God. "I am he that searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men." God has an eye that looks into our hearts directly. All the chambers of our minds are open to his view. There is no deep, dark recess within us, no secret intention, wish, or inclination, no motive or spring of action, which is concealed from him. What is concealed from all others, and even from ourselves, is naked and open to him. And he has not only a direct but a perfect knowledge of all minds in the universe. How inconceivable is the number of those who have been and are and will be inhabitants of this world, and of those higher orders of intelligent beings who inhabit the great system of worlds, of which we make so small a part! The thoughts and emotions of a single mind — who can number them?

But when we turn our attention to the myriads of minds in God's wide creation, and attempt to conceive of the millions and millions of intelligent and moral exercises which they put forth every moment, we are lost in the subject, and are as unable to form any just conception of it, as we are of infinity itself. But it is all perfectly known to God. He sees clearly, sees at a glance, sees constantly, sees with perfect ease, yea, he cannot but see, all the thoughts and desires and emotions of all created minds — all that they have had, all that they now have, and all that they will have, in an endless hereafter. The disclosures of the last day will disclose nothing to God. He will need no witnesses to give him information. He himself has seen and he perfectly recollects all the inward as well as outward acts of his creatures.

But God has knowledge of an object which infinitely transcends the created universe. *He knows himself.* He knows his own uncaused, infinite, eternal being, — his Tri-unity — all his attributes — all his thoughts and purposes. He knows his own boundless mind, and his boundless blessedness; and he knows — shall I say — *his own infinite knowledge.* This instance of God's knowledge infinitely exceeds all others. No language of man or angel can duly express it. The words of inspiration are the best we can have, to utter what is unutterable: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

We come now to the benevolence, or goodness of God. And how unlike is this to what we call benevolence or goodness in ourselves! In our unrenewed state, we have no benevolence or goodness in the higher sense; I mean such as belongs to God and holy beings. And if, by the renewal of the Spirit, we are made the subjects of holy love; that love is still mixed with much selfishness, and is exceedingly unlike to the unmixed, pure, perfect benevolence of God. Its unlikeness is very apparent in regard to its *extent.* The love of God has a height, and depth, and length, and breadth passing all understanding. *Our* benevolence is at best confined within narrow limits. We think we do well if we heartily love a few individuals, who are connected with us, or near us. Our benevolence is so circumscribed, and so inactive, that we can do

good in only a very small measure. Our acts of love are few and inconstant. The principle of goodness in us too seldom exerts itself, and never extends beyond narrow limits. Think now of God, whose "tender mercies are over all his works;" whose benevolence is as extensive as the universe; who delights to do good in the largest measure; who fills heaven and earth with the fruits of his love. The divine benevolence is an inexhaustible fountain, continually pouring forth streams of bounty and blessedness to every part of the creation. It reaches to all intelligent and all sensitive beings. It does good here, and everywhere, at the same time. It is unwearied and incessant in bestowing favors upon all men, even upon the evil and unthankful. What is the most active benevolence ever found in the mind of man, compared with the ever active and unbounded love of God! If all the benevolent affections, which have ever existed in the hearts of all holy beings in heaven and earth, should be collected together into one great and benevolent mind; what would it be compared with the benevolence of God? what but a single ray emanating from that sun which enlightens and blesses the universe!

We shall now, in the third place, consider our unlikeness to God in respect to *the manner in which he exercises and manifests his attributes in his works.*

Our unlikeness to God in this respect naturally follows from our unlikeness to him in regard to his perfections. The designs and actions of every being must correspond with his nature and attributes. And if God's nature and attributes are so far above ours, his purposes and proceedings must be so too. Can it be supposed that we, with our little minds, should think and act like a Being whose mind is infinite? that our ignorance and weakness should manifest themselves in the same manner with God's unbounded knowledge and power? — and our selfishness, in the same manner with his perfect benevolence? God's manner of acting is as far above *our* manner of acting, as his attributes are above ours. God acts like himself. And man acts like *him*self.

All *our* plans of action are like our minds, of small extent. Our knowledge can reach only to a small circle of things, and our plans

can reach no farther than our knowledge. Schemes of human wisdom may be called large and deep and sublime, in comparison with those which are inferior. But, in truth, how little have they of largeness, depth or sublimity! The plans of the merchant, of the scholar, of the literary man, and even of the Christian — how little do they take in of the concerns of the world! — how little of the concerns of a single nation, or even of a small community! And, in reality, the largest plan of any individual extends to but a small part of his own personal interests. We know not what the circumstances of ourselves, our friends, and our fellow creatures may be a few years hence, or even on the morrow; and much less what they may be in future ages. And it would be presumption and folly for us to have any plan at all, beyond the reach of our knowledge. Who of us would think of forming a scheme to be executed a thousand or even a hundred years hence? Consider now the great plan of the omniscient God; a plan which is commensurate with his boundless knowledge, comprehending the whole of this world, and all beings that exist through the illimitable universe. The plan of the divine mind relates to the interests of every being and all beings for the present time, and through ages of ages without end. This great, divine plan is as different from any plan of ours, as the understanding of God is from the understanding of man.

It is obvious too, that the plan of God is different not only from any of our plans, but from what we should suppose *his* plan would be. If such short-sighted, imperfect creatures as we are, should undertake, in our thoughts, to mark out a plan which we should suppose it would be proper for God to adopt; how different it would be from the plan which he has seen to be proper! We should undoubtedly fix upon a plan, that would exclude all evil. We should think, that a Being of unbounded goodness and power would adopt a system, which would contain holiness and happiness without mixture — a universe stamped throughout with the image of his own perfect excellence and blessedness. And if one should come and tell us, for the first time, that such a system was not the one which had been introduced, but that sin and misery abound in some large provinces of the great moral empire; should we not be surprised

and astonished, and be tempted to conclude that the information must be false; or if true, that God must be deficient either in benevolence, in wisdom, or in power? But we find that the system which God has contrived does in fact involve a great amount of evil; that important parts of the creation are dreadfully marred, and are likely to be marred forever, with sin and misery. And it is very certain too, that God has not adopted such a mixed system from any deficiency of either wisdom, or power, or benevolence. If you ask, why God has fixed upon a plan so different from what we should have thought proper; I answer, because he is a Being so different from what we are. He has chosen a system so exceedingly diverse from anything we should have imagined, because he is God, and has wisdom and goodness infinitely above ours. In this view, that which distinguishes God's system from what we should have expected, is easily accounted for. It is such as it is, so unlike what we should have supposed, because it is God's plan, resulting from that divine wisdom, which is far out of sight to us, and from that benevolence, which is as much larger than ours, as infinity is larger than our littleness and nothingness.

Here is the end of our reasoning. God's designs differ from ours because he differs from us. And our designs are not God's, because we are not God. As to our looking into God's system as he does, and understanding, as he does, the whole or any part of it, and the specific reasons why he chose it; it is in vain to attempt it. We are as unable to comprehend the particular grounds of God's great plan, as we are to comprehend those absolute perfections of his from which that plan resulted. No created being can enter into the infinite mind of God, and think as he thinks, judge as he judges, and choose as he chooses, in regard to the system of the universe. We must be satisfied with that system, if we are satisfied at all, not because we have minds large enough to comprehend it, but simply because it is God's system. Our satisfaction must come in the way of implicit confidence in him. We are not to reason out the wisdom or goodness of the system, but to believe it. And we may be sure, that a humble, childlike, confiding disposition is more pleasing to God, than the understanding of Gabriel.

But God's unlikeness to us appears not only in the plan of the universe which he has adopted, but in the execution of that plan. The manner in which God exercises and displays his attributes in all the departments of his providence, is exceedingly different from what our wisdom would dictate; so that the judgments we form from the mere use of our rational faculties, are continually contradicted by the course of God's administration. The way in which God orders things in regard to the occurrence of moral evil, is widely different from what we should think best. Consider the first human sin. God placed the parents of our race in Eden, in a state of innocence. After a while the serpent drew near to the woman to tempt her to sin. Now would you not be inclined to think, that the Maker and Guardian of the world would have interposed in behalf of the woman, so lately brought into being, and in behalf of her husband, and of the whole human race, and would have enabled her to avoid or overcome a temptation which threatened so much evil? God could turn back the tempter, or could instantly annihilate him. And why should he keep in existence that hateful animal, or the more hateful spirit that took possession of it, when he saw that so much mischief would be the consequence. We are ready to think that, little as our benevolence is, we should have hastened to the spot, and withstood the malignant enemy that was approaching the woman in the childhood of her being, and should have done all in our power to protect her from the danger which threatened her. And we should suppose that God, who has infinite benevolence, would most certainly have put forth his hand to shield her from the designs of the enemy. Or if God had seen fit to try her, as he did Abraham, we should think he would have stood by her in the hour of temptation, and would have given her such support, that she would have been steadfast in her allegiance, and obtained a victory over the most vile and detestable of creatures. Such would be the natural dictate of our wisdom and our benevolence. But did the Almighty God, who saw all that was going on, and knew what would be the consequence if he left the woman in her feebleness to stand alone, — did he interpose to

turn back or destroy the tempter, or to shield the mother of mankind from his fatal influence? Here we see that, from the commencement of divine providence towards human beings, God made it perfectly apparent that his ways are not our ways.

Look also at the consequences which followed from the first transgression. The Apostle makes a brief declaration of the general fact. He says; "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation;" "By one man's disobedience, the many" that is, the whole multitude of human beings, "were constituted sinners." How unlike is this arrangement to what we should have expected! The first sin having taken place, we should have thought that God would at once arrest the evil, and suffer it to proceed no further. But instead of this, he did in fact so order things in his sovereign providence, that all Adam's posterity, from generation to generation, have become and will become sinners in consequence of his one offence. Sin and ruin, like a mortal contagion, have spread from him through the whole race up to this time, and will continue so to spread in all future ages. All have been and all will be by nature children of wrath. — God has power to restrain men from sin — power to take away from all the posterity of Adam the heart of stone, and give them a heart of flesh. But he has not done it. He could, if he pleased, bring every human being into existence in a state of moral purity, as he did Adam, and as he did Jesus the son of Mary. But he does not. He sees fit to exercise and display his attributes in a manner exceedingly different from what our judgment would dictate — so different, that we sometimes can hardly believe the facts which his word and providence exhibit before our eyes. The arrangement of divine providence, according to which sin and condemnation were, by Adam's one offence, brought upon the whole human race, is wonderful and mysterious. I mention it now as one instance illustrative of the general truth so important for us to remember, that God is exceedingly unlike to us, as to the manner in which he displays his perfections in his works.

How easy it would be to trace out numerous instances of human sin, where the mischief done was great, and where from our

views of what is desirable, we should suppose that the Almighty would have put forth his hand to prevent it. See what the first born of Adam and Eve did to his pious brother! See the children of men, before the flood, coming to that degree of corruption which would involve them in a terrible destruction! We should think that a God of infinite power and love would have interposed to prevent the approaching ruin; that he would have poured out his Spirit and turned the hearts of men from sin to righteousness — so far at least, that there should be piety enough to preserve the world from utter desolation. Look at the brethren of Joseph, full of ill will towards him, and disposed to deeds of cruelty. God could have so ordered it in his providence, that they should have no opportunity for those cruel deeds. Or if they were in circumstances favorable to the exercise of their malignant feelings, God was able to kindle up in their hearts feelings of piety and love, and to prevent the shocking deed of selling the beloved youth as a slave into Egypt. We should suppose, that a merciful God would have held back the sons of Jacob from the commission of such a crime.

Among the many cases of evil doing which occur in the history of God's chosen people, take that of Jeroboam. He was inclined to commit such wickedness, as would be followed by the increasing corruption and misery of the people from generation to generation, and would lead on to the destruction of the ten tribes. Why did not God turn his heart, and make him like David? Or why did he not cut short his life, and place a good man in his stead? The same as to the wicked kings of Judah. Why did the Almighty God let them go on in their wickedness, till the chosen tribe, from which the Redeemer was to proceed, should become hateful in his sight, and be wasted away, and be carried captive to Babylon? And most of all, we should have thought that God would preserve his own beloved Son from the violence of his enemies, and continue his precious life through many years of the most benevolent, useful action ever known on earth. Then again, after the Christian religion was planted in different parts of the world, and flourishing churches were established by the labors

of the apostles, why did God suffer false teachers to spring up and introduce destructive errors, and to unite their influence with the powers of the world and the powers of hell, and to bring in that dreadful apostasy, which has prevailed for so many ages? Why has God suffered his fair heritage, his spiritual kingdom, to be thus despoiled of its dignity and glory, instead of making it a continual excellence and joy in all the earth?

The few instances above mentioned, in which moral evil has been suffered to take place, show clearly that God is exceedingly unlike to man, in respect to the manner in which he manifests his attributes in his works.

The same sentiment is impressed upon us, when we consider the use which God makes of moral evil, or the end to which he causes it to be subservient.

It would be impossible for us, by our own wisdom or power, to take any one instance of sin, either in ourselves or in others, and to treat it in such a manner, as to prevent the evil effects which it is fitted to produce. Sin tends to evil, and to that only. And the evil which is the appropriate fruit of sin we have no ability to prevent. How dreadful would have been the results of the apostasy of our race, and of every particular transgression, had not God's thoughts and ways been above ours! What could we have done to meet such a fearful emergency, and to make sin the occasion of good? But God has done it. Where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. Our unrighteousness has been made to commend the righteousness of God. — "Glory to God in the highest" comes in at the door of man's apostasy. It is our disposition as sinners, to oppose the blessed result. And those beings who are not sinners, and who are disposed to bring about such a result, could not of themselves do anything towards it. It was the wisdom of the eternal, infinite mind, and not the wisdom of man, which contrived the scheme of redemption. It was his love and grace which led to the choice of that scheme. It is his power which executes it. In this great work it is evident, that the manner of God's exercising and displaying his attributes in his administration, is far above what any created being could have

conceived. For now the hosts of heaven will be full of joy forever to see what immense good the only wise God will accomplish, by means of that most dreadful and deplorable event, the apostasy of our race. Their lamentations over a violated law, and a fallen world, will be turned into songs of everlasting thanksgiving and praise to him who redeemed us by his blood.

The same may be said in regard to the use which God makes of particular instances of sin. If we had been acquainted with the conduct of Joseph's brethren, and that only; could we have conceived of any way, in which it could be turned to the accomplishment of a great and lasting good to Joseph, to his aged father, and to all his brethren — good to Egypt, and to the world? Such a result was all of God. "He meant it for good," and he made it subservient to good.

Read the story of the sufferings and death of Jesus, suddenly cut off by his enemies, — crucified and laid in a tomb. What an appalling scene! The great Shepherd smitten — the sheep scattered — the hearts of the pious overwhelmed with sorrow, and the designs of divine benevolence apparently frustrated! And yet by means of that tremendous scene, God makes an unequalled display of his gracious attributes. His almighty providence comes in, and overrules the greatest of sins for the accomplishment of the most benevolent designs — the good effected by the hand of God being in proportion to the greatness of the evil committed by the hand of men. That very event which satanic malice labored so earnestly to bring about, is made the foundation of a kingdom of grace.

I might extend my remarks to a much greater length on this branch of the subject, and show how unlike God is to man, and how far above him, in regard to the manner in which he fulfils his promises to his people, and executes his threatenings upon transgressors. The whole course of providence makes it manifest, that God is as high above us, as the heavens are above the earth.

The truth which I have endeavored to illustrate, that God is so unlike to man, and so far exalted above him, is adapted to various practical uses. Let me apply it to your consciences and hearts.

You see that God's ways are in many respects widely different from man's, and that one effect of his administration is, "to confound the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent." Now are you willing it should be so? Are you willing to live in God's world, upon this principle, that he shall always show himself unlike to us and infinitely above us; that he shall continually cross our self-will, and disappoint our carnal expectations, and bring down our high looks, and administer things in his providence according to his own infallible wisdom? You have plans of your own. Are you willing to hold them subject to God's plan? You exercise your own imagination, and your own reason; and you often think what would, in your view, be the best course of action for God to pursue. Will you keep in mind that God is not man? And will you be heartily ready to give up your opinions and plans, and to acquiesce entirely in God's wise and holy providence? Are you willing to live and act to day, and to morrow, and in all time to come, on this one principle — that in the future and endless progress of the divine government which is over you, the eternal God shall rise higher and higher in the view of his creatures, and that you shall come down lower and lower before him, and that your reasonings and your schemes, whenever they differ from his, shall be set aside? Are you willing to feel your own insignificance and nothingness before the king of glory, and to fall into the current of his holy administration? Are you willing to be as nothing, and that God should be all in all?

LECTURE XVIII.

UNITY OF GOD.

THE general subject before us is the character of God, as revealed in the Scriptures.*

The first point to which we shall turn our attention, is *the divine unity*.

It may be expected, that I shall give a particular and exact explanation of Unity. But this I shall decline, for the plain reason that, strictly speaking, it is incapable of explanation; not because it is impossible or difficult to be understood; but merely because nothing is more evident. The sense of the word one, or unity, is as clear and obvious, and as incapable of being analyzed and explained, as the terms by which we express any of our simple perceptions. And a man who requires me to explain *unity*, or *one*, acts as absurdly, as if he should require me to explain *red*, or *sweet*, or *hard*. When I speak of one man, one lion, or one tree, no man can be in earnest in asking me to explain what I mean by one. He does not need and cannot desire an explanation of that which he perfectly understands, and which is as precise and simple as

* In this place I might enlarge on those particular attributes of God, both natural and moral, which are commonly treated in systems of theology, and which were always attended to with a deep and solemn interest in the Seminary. But I shall content myself, in this publication, with the very summary remarks already made on this extensive subject — a subject of paramount importance, and deserving to be often and clearly exhibited to view by christian ministers. But it is treated particularly and ably in various well known theological works; and, for myself, I have been desirous of discussing at greater length than is common, those parts of the general subject, which are encompassed with special difficulties, and to which the circumstances of the present day seem to impart a more than ordinary interest.

anything can be. Explanation, according to the general use of the word, consists in elucidating a subject by analyzing it into the more simple idea of which it is composed, or in some way casting additional light upon it. Whatever word therefore is perfectly simple and plain, cannot be illustrated by one more simple and plain; and consequently it admits of no explanation. We can explain the word thousand, by saying it means ten times an hundred; and an hundred, by saying it is ten times ten; and ten by showing ten ones or units. But when you come to one, or a unit, all explanation ceases at once. It is a simple term, conveying a simple idea, and cannot be explained.

Philosophers have sometimes defined unity to be a thing indivisible in itself, and divided from everything else. But this definition, to make the best of it, is no more clear and distinct, than the thing intended to be defined; and therefore is properly no explanation. Can any man more fully understand what it is to be indivisible in itself, and divided from everything else, than what it is for a thing to be *one?* Is there not as much reason for asking what it is to be indivisible in itself and divided from every thing else, as for asking what *unity* is? And if any man should wish to explain what it is to be indivisible in itself and divided from everything else, what better could he do, than to say it is to be *one?*

But if the notion of unity is so plain and easy, why have men been so much perplexed about it? and why have they found so much difficulty in understanding it? I answer, that in this as in many other instances, men have created perplexity and obscurity, by their frivolous attempts to elucidate what is perfectly clear. With the greatest certainty every man can say, *I am, I think, I act.* And in this is included the following; I am *one*, and *not two;* I am *myself*, and not *another*. If any man attempts to make this plainer, he unnecessarily involves himself in perplexity.

The reason then why I do not attempt to give any proper explanation or definition of unity, is, that every man has the clearest and most intimate idea of it that is possible.

But here I have two remarks to offer, the neglect of which has been the occasion of great injury to the cause of evangelical truth.

The remarks are very simple, and their truth is obvious. First; *the unity of a thing determines nothing concerning its nature, attributes, or mode of existence.* It is entirely distinct from these, and determines nothing concerning them. This is evident from the fact, that we ascribe unity to things animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, simple and complex, finite and infinite. Accordingly, the unity of God will warrant no comparison between his nature or mode of existence, and that of any created being. A tree is one. But that does not prove that the nature of a tree is like that of a lion. A lion is one, but is not on that account like a man. A man is one; but that proves no resemblance between a man and God, — no resemblance, I mean, except this, that God is one, and a man is one; which comes only to this, that God is one God, and a man is one man. The unity of the first is the unity of God; that of the second is the unity of a man, — man being of one nature, and God of another.

The second remark is, that *the unity of a thing in one respect does not determine whether it is one or many in other respects.* An army is one, that is, one army. But with respect to the individuals who compose it, it is many. A man is one, that is, one man. But as to the constituent parts of his nature, he is two fold, body and mind; and each of these is multiform, the body as to corporeal parts, the mind as to faculties and operations. The simplicity of mind, that is, its freedom from such composition as belongs to body, or its incapability of being divided into parts like body, does not imply that it cannot be considered as containing divers faculties, and as capable of divers operations.

The same general principle is true in respect to God. God is one, that is, one God. But his being one God determines nothing respecting the mode of his existence in other respects. In other words, his unity, simply considered, could not lead us to conclude that he exists either in this manner, or in that. His being Three or a Trinity in some other respect is, for aught we could know, as consistent as any of his attributes are, with his being one God. Nor can it be the least objection to his being Three in a personal respect, that we are not acquainted with any other intelligent

being who exists in three persons; because his being Three persons, that is, Three in such a sense that the personal pronoun and personal attributes and acts truly belong to each of the Three — may not arise from anything which intelligent creatures have or can have in common with him, but may indicate something which is peculiar to him, in contradistinction to all created beings.

If an explanation of unity is still called for, I would first know what is meant by the word. I am aware that scientific men sometimes explain a thing, by giving an account of its circumstances, operations, or uses. Thus they explain the law of *gravitation* by enumerating more or less of the facts which take place under that law. *Electricity* or *magnetism* they explain, by describing the phenomena which belong to it, or the effects which result from it. Thus also we give an explanation of a particular *affection*, by showing how it operates, or what influence it has. Now an explanation of such a kind may be given of unity.

The principal circumstance by which the unity of an intelligent being is indicated to us, is this; that *a series of intelligent actions are attributed to him as the agent or author.* To Paul, as an intelligent agent, we ascribe a long series of actions; — actions performed in unbelief, as the strict observance of the ceremonial law, aiding in the martyrdom of Stephen, and persecuting Christians; — actions afterwards performed for the glory of God and the good of men, as the bold profession of the Christian religion, preaching the gospel, founding churches, writing epistles, encountering opposition, and suffering a violent death. All these we attribute to Paul; not to two men, but to one man. Paul is one. All the corporeal, intellectual, and moral phenomena which he exhibits, are to be ascribed to *him*, not to another; predicated of him, not of another. With respect to all these phenomena he is one; he stands invariably in one relation to them, and that a relation, which no other being can bear to them.

And here let me say, what is evidently true, and of no small importance in this discussion, that *we can never judge what phenomena any being will exhibit, unless we are instructed by facts.* It would be impossible for us to form any conception of the fac-

ulties and actions of the mind, without an acquaintance with them by experience. For example, we could not know that the mind is capable of recalling what is past, or of the peculiar operations which take place in sleep, had we never been conscious of such mental acts. This being true, it must be regarded as incompatible with the principles of sound reasoning, to inquire in any case, whether such and such attributes or operations *can* consist together. The only proper question is, whether they *do* consist together. There are many properties and acts of the mind and body connected, which we could in no way prove or conceive to be compatible with each other, except as we know it to be a fact that they belong to the same subject, and, of course, that they do consist together, or are consistent. Curiosity may incline us to ask how they *can* be consistent. But our inability to answer this needless and unphilosophical inquiry alters not our belief of the fact. The legitimate object of research is, to discover the actual phenomena of body and mind. As soon as we discover what these phenomena are, we in effect discover their consistency. And if there is to us an appearance of inconsistency, we know it to be a mere appearance, not a reality.

Such an explanation as that above suggested may easily be given of the unity of God. God is one. All divine attributes and acts belong to this one Being, Jehovah, and to him only. All the operations which indicate divinity, we ascribe to God, to one God, not to many gods. I could be more particular and say; — it is not true that one God is just, and another merciful; or that one God possesses infinite wisdom, and another infinite power; or that one God made the sun, and another the moon; or that one God rules in the heavens, and another in the earth; or that one is the author of prosperity, and another of adversity. The creation, preservation and government of the universe, and all divine works, and all divine attributes and relations, appertain to the one God and to him only. They are all his, not another's. If any divine attributes or acts could be ascribed to any other God, there would then be a plurality of Gods; and this would be inconsistent with the divine unity.

As to the variety and extent of attributes and relations belonging to the one God — we can know nothing except what God reveals by his works in the physical and the moral world, and by the holy Scriptures. Every thing which is manifested in these ways, is to be received as making a part of the character of the one God. If his works bear indubitable marks of wisdom, power, and benevolence; we ascribe to him all these attributes. If the Scriptures declare that God hates iniquity and will punish sinners; we ascribe to him the righteousness of a moral governor. If the Scriptures teach that God can forgive sin consistently with his justice; we consider this combination of justice and grace as essential to the character of the one God. And this we should do, though we had far less knowledge, than we now have, concerning the manner in which grace can consist with justice. In this way, we might make out a particular statement of the various attributes which the one God possesses — limiting ourselves wholly to this inquiry, namely, what attributes and what mode of existence does he exhibit? And if, either in his works or his word, he exhibits himself as a *Trinity;* if it is made to appear that he is Triune — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; we have the same reason for admitting this, as for admitting any other doctrine in theology — precisely the same reason; namely, that these are attributes or properties which the one God exhibits. Nor is there any more reason to suppose, that the divine unity is infringed by the doctrine of three persons, than by the doctrine of the three divine attributes, power, wisdom, and goodness. The objection that there is no created being in whom a trinity of persons is joined with a unity of essence, has no more weight, than the objection that there is no created being in whom unity is joined with eternity, or omnipresence. — Indeed there is, from the nature of the case, the strongest presumption, that the uncreated, infinite God must possess attributes and a mode of existence widely different from any thing which belongs to finite beings. This presumption, though it would be illogical to use it as an argument to prove any particular doctrine, is yet sufficient to silence an objection, which is drawn from the difference between the divine Trinity, and any thing found in man.

I shall close this part of the discussion by two brief remarks on the question, whether there is conclusive evidence of the unity of God from the light of nature. The works of creation and providence unquestionably prove that there is a God. But do they prove that there is only one God?

On this I remark, first, that all the evidence which the works of creation afford, is occupied and exhausted in the proof of one God. After this, what more can they do? That which the creation does, and all which it does, is to prove that there is one God. It affords not a shadow of proof that there is more than one. The existence of one God is sufficient to account for all the effects which appear in the creation. And this prepares the way for my second remark; namely, that the supposition of more Gods than one, is altogether useless, and the belief of it unphilosophical. It is entirely destitute of proof. And if it could be proved, it would be of no conceivable advantage. It would contribute nothing to clear up the theory of divine truth. It would solve no difficulty. It would afford no additional motive to virtue; no additional matter of joy. Now what have we to do with a supposition, which is totally without evidence, and totally without use?

LECTURE XIX.

UNITY OF GOD, AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

In the last Lecture we considered the Unity of God chiefly as a subject of philosophical investigation. We now proceed to consider it as a subject of express divine revelation.

The Scripture evidence in proof of the divine unity is found in great abundance, both in the Old Testament and the New.

First; in the Old Testament. Exod. 20: 2, 3, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Deut. 32: 39, "I, even I am he, and there is no God with me." Isa. 43: 10, "That ye may know and believe that I am he; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me." Isa. 44: 6, "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts; I am the first and I am the last, and beside me there is no God." Isa. 45: 5, 14, 18, 21, 22, "I am God and there is none else; there is no God beside me." See also Exod. 8: 10; 9: 14; Deut. 33: 26; 1 Kings 8: 23; Jer. 10: 6; Isa. 46: 9, in which places it is strongly asserted, that there is no God besides Jehovah, and none like him.

Proceed now to the New Testament. Mark 12: 29, "The Lord our God is one Lord." John 17: 3, "That they might know thee, the only true God." Rom. 16: 27, "To the only wise God be glory." 1 Cor. 8: 4, 6, "There is none other God but one. To us there is but one God." 1 Tim. 1: 17, "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God."

But here a question of special consequence arises; namely; whether the texts above cited to prove the unity of God, are intended to stand in opposition to Christ, or in opposition to the idols

of the heathen. In other words, are the texts which assert the being of one God to be understood as exclusive of Christ, or as exclusive of idols?

In my reply, I propose to show, first, that the texts referred to assert the unity of God in opposition to *idols;* and, secondly, that they do *not* assert it in opposition to *Christ.*

First, the texts quoted are intended to assert and do assert the unity of God in opposition to the idols of the heathen.

This appears from the general tenor of the Scriptures, and the obvious circumstances of the case. It was the grand design of the sacred writings to turn men from idolatry, and recover them to the worship of the true God. When the law was given by Moses, the Israelites had long been in servitude to the Egyptians, and had been corrupted with their idolatrous practices. Moses therefore, as the minister of the Most High, made it a fundamental principle of religion, that Jehovah was the only true God. Many of the institutions, which he required the people to observe, were obviously intended to separate them from idolatrous nations, and to prevent them from rendering religious homage to any being, except the one eternal God. The prophets and apostles pursued the same plan, striving to exterminate idolatry, and to promote through the whole world the worship of the one true God.

Look into the sacred volume, and see how frequently it is the object of its precepts, and of the dispensations of providence which it records, to show the stupidity and wickedness of idolatry, and to guard the people effectually against it. Speaking to the children of Israel concerning the nations of Canaan, God said; "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them nor do after their works; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images." They were commanded not to mention the names of other gods; and not to go after them or serve them. It was represented as the great sin of that people, that they were so frequently drawn aside from the worship of Jehovah to the worship of idols. This was the abomination which excited the jealousy of the Lord, and for which his anger so often burnt against his

own inheritance. No man can take a general view of the precepts, warnings, and historical facts, recorded in the Old Testament, without perceiving that it was a prime object to destroy polytheism, and to establish the unity of God in opposition to the false gods worshipped among the Gentiles. The truth of my position will be still more apparent, from a careful consideration of some of the texts which most particularly declare the divine unity, and which, as we shall see, had a manifest bearing upon the point under consideration.

The first two commandments of the decalogue were aimed directly and expressly against idol worship. See also Deut. 32: 39, "I, even I am he, and there is no God with me." Now examine the connection. In verse 15th and onward, the Israelites are charged with provoking God to jealousy by strange gods, and in direct opposition to those false gods, Jehovah says; "See now, I AM HE, and there is no god with me."

Isa. 44: 6, "Thus saith the Lord, I am the first and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." Immediately upon this, the prophet sets himself to expose the folly of those who make and worship graven images."

Isa. 45: 6, 7. "That they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things." The Jews at the time referred to, dwelt among the eastern nations, whose Magi held that there are two divinities, one the author of light, the other of darkness; one of good, the other of evil. The unity of Jehovah is here asserted in opposition to that particular error of the Magians.

The same appears in the New Testament.

Mark, 12: 29. Jesus declared the first and great command of the law to be this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." Now if we recur to the law of Moses, from which this precept was quoted, we shall perceive that it was intended to establish the worship of Jehovah in contradistinction to idols. 1 Cor. 8: 4, 5, 6. This passage very strongly and decisively asserts the unity of God

in contradistinction to idols. It cannot then be doubted that the texts which declare the unity of Jehovah, do it in opposition to idol gods.

Before entering upon the proof of my second position, namely, that the texts referred to are not intended to be exclusive of Christ, let us pause a little, and see what light may be cast upon it from the position which has now been established.

If then the texts which declare the unity of God are manifestly aimed against polytheism; if they are intended to prove the true Godhead of Jehovah in distinction from idols; then clearly there is no propriety in urging them as arguments against the divinity of Christ, and any valid arguments against the doctrine must be derived from some other source.

The question to be settled is, whether Christ is truly God. Unitarians undertake to prove the negative. And they do it chiefly, by citing those texts which declare that there is only one God. But as those texts all relate to another subject, their argument is manifestly irrelevant and futile. See whether it is not so. The Bible contains various texts which declare that there is only one God, and that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is that one God. We have seen that these texts were aimed against polytheism, and were designed to establish the worship of one God in distinction from idols. On what principle then can they be urged against the Godhead of CHRIST? If the argument has any weight, it must be on the supposition that CHRIST is one of those idols which are meant to be excluded. But is it so? When God said by Moses, "I, even I am he, and there is no God with me, and thou shalt have no other gods before me"; did he mean to guard the Israelites against paying divine honors to their Saviour, the angel of the covenant? Did God, or any prophet or apostle ever intimate, that any man would ever be in danger of esteeming the Redeemer of the world too highly?

This is only the weakest part of the argument. Direct, positive proof, that the sacred writers never did intend to assert the Godhead of Jehovah exclusively of Christ, will be brought forward by itself in the sequel.

What now becomes of the most plausible objection, which the Socinians urge against the Godhead of Christ? What becomes of this their favorite argument? *We* make use of the same texts with them to prove the divine unity. We give these texts their full and perfect sense, and consider them as affording the clearest proof, that there is one God, and that there is none beside him; that all the gods of the heathen, and all who have been or shall be honored as God, beside Jehovah, are vanity and a lie. This the texts clearly prove. Do they prove anything more? Especially do they prove that Christ is not God? Certainly they do not, unless it can be made perfectly clear, that Christ is one of the idols opposed, or else that the unity of God precludes the possibility of the Godhead of Christ. But this grand point, which is the chief point at issue, and on which their system mainly rests, and which therefore calls for the clearest proof, they always take for granted. For after proving from Scripture, that Jehovah is the only true God, they draw the conclusion that Christ is not God. They assume, that the divine unity is evidence against the Godhead of Christ. We hold the divine unity; but we deny that it affords any evidence against the Godhead of Christ. The question therefore to be debated is, whether the unity of God is conclusive evidence against the Godhead of Christ. They hold the affirmative. But they have never offered or attempted to offer any better proof, than confident affirmation. Indeed, they seem to think there is no occasion for proof. For when they have proved the unity of God, they treat the subject just as if they had *disproved* the Godhead of Christ, and so ended the controversy. We call for plain, conclusive evidence, that the doctrine of the divine unity is incompatible with the divinity of Christ. — They might as well affirm, that the unity of God is incompatible with his omnipresence; or that, if God is in heaven, he cannot be on earth at the same time. And they might as reasonably expect us to admit this upon the ground of their naked affirmation, as to admit that proving the unity of God is disproving the divinity of Christ. Here the matter rests. And until they produce a clear demonstration, that the unity of God necessarily precludes the Divinity

of Christ, all their reasoning from the divine unity is impertinent and futile, and the grand argument for their system is good for nothing.

You will bear in mind the two propositions which I undertook to establish; first, that the texts which declare that there is one and only one God, are intended to assert the divine unity in opposition to the idols of the heathen; second, that they do not assert and are not intended to assert the divine unity in opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first of these propositions I have already endeavored to confirm. By an examination of the texts themselves, and the places where they are found, together with the general scope of Scripture, and the state of the world, we were led to conclude, that it was and must have been the object of the inspired writers in those texts, to make known the only true God, and to induce all men to worship him, in contradistinction to idols.

This first proposition seems of itself to cast some light upon the second, and to prepare the way for its establishment. For if the texts above mentioned were expressly designed to prove, that Jehovah is the only true God *exclusively of idols;* they cannot be regarded as exclusive of the Lord Jesus Christ, unless it can be made evident, which no one pretends, that he is included among those idols.

With these things in view, I have examined the reasoning of Unitarians; and I think it has been made to appear, that the argument which they deduce from the texts referred to against the Godhead of Christ, is totally inconclusive; — that it is manifestly a begging of the question.

If you are not satisfied, examine it again. Unitarians attempt to prove that Christ is not God. How do they prove it? They prove it by the texts which assert that there is one and only one God. But those texts were meant by the inspired writers to assert that Jehovah is the true God *in opposition to false gods.* Is JESUS CHRIST one of those false gods? Certainly not. How then can the texts be supposed to stand in opposition to him?

But this is not all. I have undertaken to show, not only that

there is no reason to suppose that the texts referred to were intended to exclude Christ from being God, but that there is clear and direct evidence that they were *not* thus intended. In other words; I have undertaken to show that there is in this case no conclusive evidence in favor of the Unitarian theory, but very conclusive evidence against it.

I come now to my chief argument in support of the proposition, that the texts which assert the unity of God, were not designed to be exclusive of Christ.

The grand principle of a just exposition is, that the Bible be its own interpreter. In applying this principle, we proceed thus. We find texts, the meaning of which at first appears doubtful. We then inquire whether any light can be cast upon them by what stands immediately connected with them, or by the general scope of those parts of Scripture which contain them. We inquire also concerning the age and circumstances in which the texts were written. And finally we go to other parts of Scripture, which treat of the same subject, or other subjects allied to it; attending particularly to those passages where the subject is expressly brought into view. This last step is of chief importance and most to be relied upon.

With these principles before us, we endeavor to satisfy ourselves whether the texts which declare the unity of God, ought to be understood, as excluding the Lord Jesus Christ. First, we examine what is immediately connected with those texts. This examination has already shown us, that the particular design of those texts was to establish the Godhead of Jehovah in opposition to *idols*. Thus far then, we find no support for the supposition, that Christ is meant to be excluded. For if all which we can learn is, that the texts were intended for *one particular purpose;* with what propriety can we apply them to another purpose entirely different? The manifest design of them being to prevent idol worship, how can we suppose that they were intended to prevent the worship of the Saviour, unless he is to be numbered with those idol gods, to which the texts expressly refer?

We next consider the particular ages and circumstances in which

those parts of Scripture were written. And here it has been made apparent, that in the time of Moses, and from that time till after the captivity, the children of Israel were prone to fall in with the prevalent idolatry. The conclusion is, that inspired prophets and legislators must have made it a special object to guard the people on every side against polytheism; and that, when they labored to prove that Jehovah is the only true God, it must have been their object to promote the worship of him in opposition to the worship of idols. This was most evidently the design of the sacred writers. Accordingly, we cannot suppose that they meant to exclude Christ from the Godhead, unless it can be shown that they meant to include him among the heathen idols; and this no one pretends. An examination of the New Testament writings, and of the circumstances of those for whom they were originally designed, leads to the same conclusion. Christianity had to make its way through idolatrous nations. Its success involved the destruction of polytheism. It was necessary not only to persuade men to cast away their idols in the first instance, in order to become Christians, but to inculcate upon them again and again the most serious cautions against being withdrawn from the pure worship of the one true God, and corrupted with the popular superstitions. Hence we are fully satisfied what must have been the design of those texts in the New Testament, which declare that there is one God, even if it were not so obvious as it is from their immediate connections.

According to our rule of interpretation, we now go to other texts of Scripture relative to the subject before us. And as some of them particularly and expressly treat of this subject, we may expect to find direct and conclusive proof.

Open then the sacred volume at the beginning of John's Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ is the subject of discourse. This Evangelist, the most intimate friend of Jesus Christ, undertakes to inform us who Christ was. This is his special object. We may therefore look for information which can be relied upon. But what is that information? In the very first sentence he announces to us the Godhead of Christ, — "The WORD was GOD." The Bible is its own interpreter. Many texts assert that there is one God, and

that there is none beside him. This asserts that Christ is God. How can we suppose that those texts *excluded* Christ, when this expressly *includes* him! How can we admit that those texts prove that Christ is *not* God, when this asserts that he *is* God?

Turn now to Heb. 1: 8. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." It is quoted from the 45th Ps. The apostle teaches us, that it was addressed to Christ. Here again the Bible calls Christ God; and, besides this, ascribes to him that everlasting dominion which is one of the prerogatives of Jehovah. The inspired writers declare in various texts, that Jehovah is the only true God, and that he reigns forever. The same inspired writers say to Christ; "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." What is the conclusion? — that the former texts are intended to exclude Christ from being God? How then do we make the Bible its own interpreter?

Rom. 9: 5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." Acts 10: 36. "He is Lord of all." Isa. 9: 6, "the mighty God." The question returns. Can we suppose that the same inspired volume, which here asserts that Christ is "Lord of all," "the mighty God," "over all God blessed forever," meant to imply the contrary in those texts which teach the divine unity?

I give only a specimen of the reasoning we ought to pursue in making the Bible its own interpreter. It is evident that this general mode of interpretation must be adopted in some cases by Unitarians themselves. Take, for example, such texts as these; "Christ is Lord of all;" "To us there is one Lord." But is Christ Lord of all, or the one Lord of Christians, in such a sense as to exclude God the Father from being Lord? This is easily determined. The texts which ascribe absolute Lordship to God the Father, prove clearly that he is not meant to be excluded by those texts which assert that we have one Lord Jesus Christ, and that he is Lord of all. There is no other argument by which Unitarians can prove that Christ is not Lord exclusively of the Father. But the argument is as good for us, as for them. If they can prove from one set of texts, that the Father is God *exclusively* of

the *Son;* we can in the same way prove, from another set of texts, that Christ is Lord exclusively of the *Father*. And if Unitarians can show, that these texts do not prove Christ to be Lord exclusively of the Father, by citing others which declare the Father to be Lord; we can show that the texts which assert that there is only one God, do not prove the Father to be God exclusively of Christ, by citing passages which declare Christ to be God.

It may possibly be objected, that in the interpretation of particular texts relating to Christ, by citing others relating to the same subject, I do not proceed fairly and impartially; because I do not quote *all* the texts which relate to the character of Christ, — that I select only those which speak of him in the sublimest manner, while I omit others which present him in an inferior light, and which would lead to a different conclusion.

My reply is a short one. I ask then, what is our *object* in this investigation? It is to discover, what is the *highest glory of Christ's character*. This being our object, it is certainly proper to attend particularly to those texts, where his highest glory is brought into view. What other course could be taken?

The objector urges, that a citation of other texts relative to Christ, would lead to a different conclusion; that is, that those texts which represent Christ as a dependent being, a suffering and dying man, would lead us to conclude that he is not God. My present reply is, that the objection rests wholly on the assumption, that there cannot be in the person of Christ a union of human nature with divinity; or more plainly, the objector assumes that Christ cannot be both God and man, and that if the Scriptures teach that he is man, they cannot teach that he is God. It is sufficient to say here, that this is an unsupported assumption; though Unitarians make it the basis of many of their arguments.

This then is my reasoning with the Unitarians, and thus the matter stands. If the Bible is allowed to be its own interpreter, it is impossible that the texts which assert the unity of God, should have been designed to exclude Christ from the Godhead. For cast your eye over the Bible and see what it declares, when

speaking directly and expressly of Christ. "The word was God." "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." "Who is over all God blessed forever." "I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts." "I am the first and the last." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." "Lord of lords, and King of kings." "The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands." "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." "By him were all things created in heaven and in earth, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him." "He is before all things, and by him all things consist." "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Blessing and honor, and dominion, and power be unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever." Now it is, I maintain, utterly impossible, that men who wrote under the infallible guidance of the divine Spirit, and who made it their special object to destroy the worship of created beings, and to promote the worship of Jehovah alone, should have familiarly used language like that above cited concerning one whom they meant to exclude from the Godhead — language which naturally leads those who feel any proper reverence for the word of God, to ascribe divine perfection to Christ, — language as strong and as unequivocal, as you can suppose the inspired writers could possibly have used, admitting it to have been their direct object, to teach the Divinity of Christ.

It is, I said, impossible, that men who wrote under the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit, should have used such language concerning one whom they meant to exclude from the Godhead; because such infallible guidance must have secured them from forgetting their main object, and from everything which would tend to defeat it. Such guidance must have preserved them from the effects of human ignorance and weakness. It must have preserved them from everything hazardous or dubious in their mode of teaching the truths of religion — from everything ill adapted to answer the end they had in view.

I said it is impossible that inspired men, who made it their special object to destroy idolatry and promote the worship of Jehovah, should have used *such language in such a case.* For if they remembered that they were writing for the benefit of those who were surrounded by idolatrous practices, they must have felt the importance of using the most guarded expressions, especially when speaking on a subject in which the divine unity was concerned. They must have made it their care not to give the remotest occasion for supposing, that they themselves worshipped as God, any being beside Jehovah, or that they countenanced others in doing this. They certainly did make this their care. They opposed idolatry in every form. They employed various methods to expose the absurdity and wickedness of worshipping any being not truly divine. Now is it possible, that men divinely inspired, men so alive to the honor of Jehovah, men who made it their special object to destroy idolatry and promote the worship of the one true God, should have used the language, cited above, concerning a being, whom they meant to exclude from any share in the honors of the Godhead.

Such language is manifestly suited to lead those, who feel a proper reverence for the word of God, to ascribe divine honor to Christ. It is very manifestly suited to do this; because the inspired writers, though so jealous for the honor of Jehovah, and so earnest in their cautions against substituting any one in his place, never give any direction not to deify Christ; never say any thing to caution us either directly or indirectly, against honoring him too highly. There is not the least appearance of their ever having thought, that the glory of the one true God was in danger of being obscured by ascribing divine glory to the Saviour. When they speak of him as God, Lord of all, over all God blessed forever, there is not the least appearance of its having occurred to them as a probable or possible event that men would mistake their meaning, and give too high a sense to their expressions. On the contrary, they seem to have laid out all their powers to find the sublimest and strongest expressions, for the very purpose of elevating our ideas of Christ to the highest degree, and per-

suading us to honor him even as we honor the Father. On the supposition that it was their avowed design to teach that Christ has true and proper divinity, what stronger or more unequivocal language could they have used? What forms of expression can be imagined, which would more clearly and satisfactorily make known the Godhead of Christ? What expressions could be less capable of being turned, by a subtle criticism, to another signification? Review these texts again and again, and you must I think be satisfied, that the inspired writers could not have used language stronger, more elevated, or more unequivocal, admitting it to have been their real design to teach the proper Deity of Christ. Even if the Scripture representations of Christ were not so strong, not so elevated and unequivocal, as they are; they would still be fitted, considering the circumstances of the case, to excite religious adoration in all Christians. For the Lord Jesus Christ is preëminently their Friend, their Benefactor, their Deliverer. He has bestowed upon them the most essential benefits, and stands in the most endearing relation to them. In such a case, how easily might they be betrayed into an excessive veneration, if any degree of veneration could be excessive! If Christ be not divine, the circumstances of the case evidently expose his disciples to a most dangerous mistake, and render a double guard necessary to keep them from giving to another the things which are God's. Crellius a distinguished Socinian was sensible of this danger; and he supposes that the sacred writers do effectually guard against it. With a strange mixture of palpable truth and palpable mistake he says: "By how much Christ is esteemed by the sacred writers to be greater than all other divinities, the Father excepted; so much the more cautious have they been not to give him expressly the name of God, lest he should be taken for that Supreme God, who only is the Father." "Christ," he says, "even while on earth, like the Almighty God himself, governed creatures by a single word. So that if he had been expressly called God by the sacred writers, and not always contradistinguished from God, the sacred writers would have furnished an occasion for inconsiderate men to put him in the place of the

Supreme God." Now is there, in truth, the least appearance of such cautions as this writer supposes, and as the case would plainly require? If Christians carefully read the texts which declare the glory of their Saviour, feeling at the same time that implicit confidence in revelation which God requires them to feel; will they not most certainly be led to ascribe to him divine perfection and honor? The language which the inspired writers employ would be adapted to produce such an effect in *any* case; but most of all in this case. Now is it possible, that those holy men, under the direction of infinite wisdom, should have employed language which naturally has this tendency, and has actually produced this effect, had they meant to be understood as excluding Christ from being God? "If a writer," says Priestley, "expresses himself with clearness, and really means to be understood, he cannot fail to be understood with respect to every thing of consequence."

Here then you may see to what difficulty and perplexity we should be reduced by embracing the scheme of Unitarians. The inspired writers teach that there is one and only one God, meaning to exclude, as Unitarians would have it, not only the idols of the heathen, but the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet those same inspired writers, under the infallible guidance of the Spirit, use such expressions concerning Christ, as naturally lead us to regard him as God. And they use these expressions, without the least appearance of wishing to limit the sense, or to guard Christians against carrying their esteem for their Saviour to the highest point of reverence. Yea, they use these expressions with a manifest design to elevate our minds to the most adoring views of his character, seeming to be never able to find terms strong enough to express their own religious veneration for him, or to excite proper veneration in others. They speak familiarly in this manner respecting Christ, when it is perfectly apparent, that those who feel the greatest reverence for the Scriptures, will be the most likely to mistake their meaning, and to worship him whom they intended that no man should worship.

This is a fair statement of the difficulties to which the Socinian scheme would reduce us.

You perceive that they who hold this scheme, make no account whatever of those texts, which give the highest representations of the glory of Christ. Their belief is just what it would be, if all those texts were struck out of the Bible. Though the Bible declares in the most unequivocal manner, that Christ is God, the first and the last, the Creator and upholder of all things; such declarations give not the least information to Unitarians; they produce no effect upon their opinions, and are of no consideration with them in explaining other parts of the sacred volume which relate to the same subject. To the texts which declare the unity of God, they give the very same sense which they would give, if those texts constituted the whole Bible. They hold the same opinions of Christ which they would hold, if the Scriptures contained nothing but those texts, which represent him as a man.

This is the spirit of Unitarianism. And this is the mode of handling Scripture on which it depends.

LECTURE XX.

IMPORTANCE OF DERIVING OUR OPINIONS FROM THE WHOLE OF WHAT SCRIPTURE TEACHES.

HAVING, in preceding Lectures, considered in a general way the subject of the divine unity in its relation to the Trinity, we proceed now to a more particular consideration of what the Scriptures reveal respecting this peculiar mode of the divine existence. The subject of the Trinity admits of being treated in two ways. The first way is, to cite the texts which exhibit the three together, as the form of Baptism and one of the Benedictions; and then to add those texts which indicate a plurality, and which, with the help of the more explicit texts before referred to, must be considered as implying the doctrine of Trinity. The other way is, to take into view what the Scriptures teach in relation to each of the three; first, in relation to the Father; secondly, to the Son; and thirdly, to the Holy Spirit; and then to consider the three in connection with the divine unity. I propose to avail myself of the benefit of both the methods. But as I attach special importance to the last method, I shall dwell upon it more particularly and fully.

Now all Christians agree that the Father is truly God, possessed of all the perfections of divinity. This then need not be particularly argued, but may be taken as a settled point. No one doubts that the Father is very God. And no one, but a Pantheist, doubts his personality. We proceed then to what the Scriptures reveal respecting the Son. And here, on account of the long continued controversy in Christendom, we shall find it necessary to devote much time to the momentous subject, and to investigate it patiently and earnestly. This for the present is to be our theme. We are

to inquire what is the character of him who is the Saviour of sinners, the Head of the church, our great High Priest, and the Judge of the world. What can be more important than to obtain just and Scriptural views of this glorious personage! May the divine Spirit, in the exercise of his peculiar office, illuminate our minds, and lead us to a true spiritual knowledge of the Son of God.

As this is altogether a matter of pure revelation, our only inquiry will be, what say the Scriptures? And if we would come to a right conclusion, we must take care to derive our views of Christ's character, not from a part, but from the whole of what the Scriptures reveal.

In this Lecture, I shall dwell on this point, and shall endeavor to illustrate *the propriety and importance of deriving our views of Christ from the whole of what the Scriptures teach.*

Consider then the obvious design of the Holy Scriptures, and the manner in which they were written. If the Bible was not designed to be taken as a whole, why was the whole written? If what is said in one part was deemed sufficient to afford all the instruction we need; for what purpose were the other parts given? The supposition, that any one part of the Scriptures is, by itself, without regard to the other parts, intended to afford us all necessary light, is an impeachment of that infinite wisdom, under the guidance of which all the parts of Scripture were written.

God has not seen fit, in any case, to give his creatures at once all the instruction they need. Here, as elsewhere, his work is progressive. The light of revelation was like that of the sun, which first appears a glimmer in the east, and from that increases to the brightness of noon-day. The Bible was written at divers times, and in many different parts. Every succeeding part added something to what was written before; and all parts, taken together, make known the articles of our faith.

The propriety of deriving our views from the whole of Scripture will appear most clearly, when applied to subjects which are of a complex nature, involving a great variety of parts, or relations. In such a case, it is impossible that the subject should be well under-

stood from a single text. Sometimes the complexity and obscurity of the subject are such, that making it fully known requires different periods of time, and different modes of instruction. God, in the exercise of his mercy, has been pleased to employ different periods of time and different modes of instruction; and has granted us a volume, containing the substance of all that has been communicated by inspiration. If we would accord with the divine intention, we must never expect to derive from a single text, all the light we need on a subject which is treated in many different texts.

This mode of inquiry I am sensible is unfavorable to indolence, and to hasty conclusions; — unfavorable to indolence, because it requires diligent, careful and repeated attention to all parts of revelation; and unfavorable to hasty conclusions, because the opinion which we might be ready to entertain from our first view of a single text, must frequently be modified, and sometimes set aside, by a consideration of the whole scope of Scripture.

I might illustrate the reasonableness of this mode of inquiry respecting the character of Christ, from the fact that we adopt the same mode of inquiry on other subjects. To determine the character of God, or the character of man, we take a general survey of the Scriptures. Should we form our opinion of God from a few texts only, say from those which represent him as angry, and repenting; or our opinion of man from those texts only, which declare that he was created in the image of God; we should fall into great and hurtful mistakes.

This brings me to evince the importance of the principle laid down above, from the consequences of neglecting it. A great multitude of errors which have been propagated respecting Christ in different ages, have been the consequence of men's deriving their opinions of him from a part of Scripture, to the neglect of other parts. Sects and disputants most opposed to each other, may argue very plausibly and successfully in support of their respective schemes, if they are allowed to reason from single texts, separate from other texts. In some instances, men who would not be thought to neglect any part of the Bible, still manifest a disproportionate regard to those parts which seem to favor their particu-

lar scheme; and whatever their pretensions may be, do in reality take their notions from a set of favorite texts.

This error in the mode of reasoning is so frequent and pernicious, and yet so subtle, and so little thought of, that I shall take pains to expose it by referring to several examples.

I begin with the principal Socinian hypothesis respecting the character of Christ; which is, that Christ was a *mere man*, and that he began to exist when he was born in Bethlehem. This hypothesis Socinians attempt to support by Scripture. But how? By citing the texts, which teach that Jesus Christ was a man, and that he was born and lived and died like other men. On such texts as these they found their doctrine of the simple humanity of Christ.

But in this argument they entirely neglect the principle, that our religious belief is to be derived from a diligent and impartial attention to all parts of Scripture. For they could not believe that Christ is a mere man, if all parts of the Bible received an equal portion of their regard; inasmuch as the Bible, in some parts, teaches that Christ existed before he was a man, and has a nature above that of man, as clearly as it teaches, in other parts, that he is a man.

It is allowed that the texts, on which the Socinians build their scheme, do represent Christ as having all the characteristic properties of humanity, and prove him to be a real and proper man. This is our doctrine. And if the Bible gave no other and no higher representations of him, we should of necessity consider him to be a man and nothing more; just as we consider Paul and Moses to have been men and nothing more. But the Bible gives other representations of Christ, and attributes to him the works and properties of a being superior to man. The Socinian hypothesis sets aside these higher representations, and rests wholly upon texts of a lower import.

See now whether their belief is not exactly the same as it would be, if the Bible contained those texts only, which represent Christ as a man, who began to exist when he was born of Mary. You cite the text where Christ said to the Jews: "Before Abraham

was, I am." But Socinus says this text means, — "before Abram can be Abraham, that is the father of many nations, I must be the Messiah." Grotius thinks it only means that Christ was before Abraham in the divine decree. So they handle it. The text teaches the preëxistence of Christ. But with Socinians it has no effect. It produces no alteration or modification of their belief, that Christ was simply human. Their opinion of Christ is just what it would be, if the Bible contained nothing to prove his preexistence.

You quote the first verse in John's Gospel: "The word was God." They say the word means, not Christ, but an attribute of God.

You cite the texts which speak of Christ, as having come down from heaven — as being the Lord from heaven — as having a glory with the Father before the world was — as the creator and supporter of all things in heaven and earth — as almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent. Upon all these texts they put such a construction, as will agree with their preconceived belief, that Christ is a mere man. Did they pay an impartial regard to these texts, their views of Christ, derived from other texts, would be modified and enlarged. They would indeed believe him to be a man, as those other texts plainly teach. But they would be led, by these texts, to believe that he possesses a character above that of man. By common consent the Bible teaches the humanity of Christ. They say it teaches nothing more. Thus in forming their creed, they regard only one part of Scripture. The other parts, instead of having any influence to extend or modify their faith, only give exercise to their ingenuity in explaining them away, or in imposing such a sense upon them as will not impugn their hypothesis.

Proceed now to the Arians. They believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, though a being of a very exalted nature, was created by God, or derived from God; that he is, in his essence, distinct from God, dependent upon him, and in all respects inferior to him. It has been the belief of Arians, that the spirit of Christ preëxisted, and that this preëxistent spirit animated his body, instead of a human soul. The Arians found their general hypothesis upon those

texts, which speak of Christ as the first born of every creature, as the image or manifestation of the invisible God, and the brightness of his glory — connected with those which represent the Father, as the one God and Father of all — as above all — as greater than Christ — and Christ as under the authority of the Father, and sent by the Father.

This scheme, though more elevated than that of Socinus, is yet open to the same charge of resting upon one class of texts, and passing over or superseding others. The texts which the Arians select do indeed prove beyond a doubt, that the Son is distinct from the Father, and subordinate to him; that he is commissioned by him, and acts in his name. But the sense of these texts is to be qualified by others which Arians neglect. Their scheme is exactly what it would be, if the texts which make the highest representations of the glory of Christ were expunged. For although you cite passages which declare, that Christ is God — passages which ascribe all divine perfections, names, titles, works and honors to Christ, and which represent him as the object of religious worship; you produce no effect upon their minds. From these texts, in connection with the others, we ought in all fairness to conclude, that the subordination and inferiority of Christ must be of such a nature, as to be consistent with his being partaker of the same perfections with the Father; that his being a child, born in the days of Herod, must be consistent with his being from everlasting; that his being weak and dependent, and needing the help of angels, must be consistent with his being the Creator and Upholder of all things, even of those angels whose help he needed; that his dying must be consistent with his having life unchangeably in himself; that his seeking the glory of the Father must be consistent with his requiring all men to honor him, even as they honor the Father. And this is the same as saying, that the Scripture proves only that Christ is subordinate and inferior to the Father in some respects, not that he is so in all respects. Here the Arian hypothesis is evidently faulty, not being grounded upon this combined sense of all the texts which relate to the subject. It overlooks the maxim, that our faith is to be derived, not from a part, but from the whole of what the Bible teaches.

There is yet another class of texts which relate to this point, and go to prove in what sense the Son is subordinate and inferior. I refer to those which represent Christ as laying aside the glory which he had with the Father; as humbling himself; as becoming man; in short, as taking upon him, by voluntary condescension, that very character and office, in which he acted in subordination to the Father. Now if it was his own voluntary act to *become* a servant, we conclude that, previously, he was not a servant; that the condition of a servant was not originally his, but was freely entered into for the purpose of redemption. These texts then plainly require, that those other texts, which speak of Christ as subordinate and inferior, should be understood as relating to his state of humiliation — to his assumed character, not to his original character and state. But the Arian hypothesis overlooks the texts above mentioned. It is the same with Arians, as if the Bible, in this matter, gave no explanation of itself, but left us to suppose that those texts, which represent Christ as subordinate and inferior, respect the highest glory of his character.

There is one point more, on which the Arians clearly rest their hypothesis upon a few texts of Scripture, and those evidently misunderstood. They hold that the preëxistent spirit of Christ was in his incarnation, united to a human body merely, that preëxistent spirit, with the body, constituting the person of the Mediator, *without a human soul.* The texts which are supposed to furnish support to this opinion are such as these: "The word was made flesh." "A body hast thou prepared me." "He condemned sin in the flesh."

The asserters of this scheme neglect the principle of interpretation above laid down, in two ways. First; they neglect the explanation which is found of the word *flesh*, in a variety of texts, where it stands for the human nature complete, and is of the same import with *man*, or *mankind.* Again, they neglect those texts, which represent Christ as having all the characteristics of a human soul. Had they taken into account these two classes of texts, and made use of them to explain and modify the meaning of the few texts above mentioned; they must have seen that, so

far as Scripture is concerned, their scheme is entirely destitute of support.

Thus the Arian hypothesis is not built on the whole Scripture taken together; and it could never have been adopted, but from the proneness of men to found their opinions upon a few texts separately considered.

The opinion of the Docetae, which was also held by the Gnostics, furnish another example of the most palpable neglect of the principle above stated. This opinion was, that Jesus Christ was born, lived and died, not in reality, but only in *appearance.* Now can it be, that the advocates of such an opinion had a single text of Scripture to offer in its defence? Undoubtedly they had. And if the texts which they quoted were to be taken by themselves, they would furnish as plausible an argument in support of this dream, as many other sectarians have to offer. The Docetae could plead that, according to the Scriptures, Christ took upon him the *form* of a servant; that he was made in the *likeness* of men, and that he was found in *fashion as* a man. Here, they could say, the Apostle evidently teaches, that Christ was a man and a servant only in *form* or *appearance.* It is unnecessary to take pains to show what total disregard of the Scriptures generally is manifested in their reasoning, or what imposture it charges upon Christ.

For the sake of illustrating still further the consequences of neglecting the principle under consideration, I shall give one example more. Some forty years since, certain individuals in New England, very much in conformity with the scheme of James Purves, and with the general views of the Arians, took upon them to attack the common doctrine of the Trinity, and to assert, that Jesus Christ is the *Son of God literally*, that is, in the same sense as Isaac was the son of Abraham. The texts which they urged to support this notion, are those which represent Christ as the Son of God, as God's own and only Son, and as begotten of God. Their grand mistake was of the same nature with that which I have been laboring to expose, that is, deriving a doctrine from a part of Scripture, and not from a connected view of the whole.

There are several distinct classes of texts, which they ought to have taken into view, before forming an opinion on this subject. First, they ought to have considered those texts, which clearly show that the phrases Son of God, begotten of God, etc., are generally used in a metaphorical sense, and which therefore furnish a presumptive proof, that they are used metaphorically here. Secondly, they ought to have considered the numberless texts, which give such representations of the nature of God the Father, as are totally irreconcilable with the idea, that he can be a Father, or beget a son, in a literal sense, that is, in the sense in which Abraham was the Father of Isaac. Thirdly, they ought to have considered those texts, which ascribe to Christ such attributes as are inconsistent with his being a son literally; and, fourthly, those texts which in some degree explain the peculiar sense, in which the sonship of Christ is to be understood. Now whatever may be the professions of those who contend for the literal sense of Scripture relative to the sonship of Christ; it is very clear that their belief rests wholly upon a few select passages, and is just what it would be, if the four classes of texts, above alluded to, were expunged from the Bible. All they can offer in support of their opinion is, that the Bible declares frequently and plainly that Christ is the Son of God, begotten of God, etc. Whereas they ought particularly to inquire, whether revelation in other parts casts any additional light on the subject, and informs us in what *sense* Christ is the Son of God. To argue that because the Bible declares Christ to be the Son of God, therefore he must be the Son of God in the same sense in which Isaac was the son of Abraham, is just like arguing that, because the Bible declares that God repented, therefore he repented in the same sense in which Peter repented.

I have thus, in a few instances, noticed the consequences of neglecting the rule above stated, namely, that our belief respecting Christ should be derived, not from a part of Scripture, but from a connected view of the whole. The rule will apply to any other subject as well as to this. From the examples given it will be manifest, that the neglect of this principle naturally leads to

a multitude of clashing opinions; and that there is scarcely any error, which is not capable of being supported by plausible arguments, if men are allowed to reason from a few solitary texts, to the neglect of others which relate to the same subject.

If then this rule appears so reasonable, from a consideration of the obvious design of the Scriptures, and the manner in which they were written; and from the fact, that we do and must observe the same rule in our inquiries on other subjects; and if consequences so dishonorable to revelation, and so fatal to the cause of truth, flow from the neglect of it; certainly we ought to imprint it indelibly upon our minds, and, in all our future investigations, to avail ourselves of its salutary influence.

LECTURE XXI.

THE DANGER OF ANALOGICAL REASONING RESPECTING THE TRINITY.

MEN embrace error under the influence of a great variety of causes. And a careful consideration of these causes of error may be an important safeguard to those, who are inquiring after the truth. In the last Lecture, I undertook to show that many are led to entertain defective and erroneous opinions of Christ by an exclusive or disproportionate regard to particular parts of Scripture. I shall now treat of another cause which, either by itself, or in connection with the one before considered, acts with great power, though frequently in a very concealed manner, in misguiding the minds of men. I have already noticed the strong propensity, of which all must be conscious, to judge of everything which is of a spiritual nature, by some analogy. There is no need of adding to the remarks before made on the mischievous tendency of analogical reasoning on moral and religious subjects generally. We are now to consider it particularly in relation to *the character of Christ, and the doctrine of the Trinity.* It will require but little time to show, that the erroneous opinions, which are entertained on these points, are occasioned more or less by the supposition of some analogy which does not exist.

The most powerful objection which has ever been urged against the doctrine of three persons in one God is, that it is contrary to analogy. Nothing like a Trinity of persons in the Godhead can be found among created beings. This is the difficulty. When Unitarians say, there is an absurdity in the doctrine; the absurdity appears, on inquiry, to be nothing but a departure from analogy.

Make any distinction respecting God, which corresponds with something found in man; say, for example, that he has a variety of attributes, of which men can form some notion from what they are conscious of in themselves; and they make no objection. However profound or inscrutable the object may be; yet if they can perceive that it has an analogy to something which pertains to man, they are satisfied. But as they have never known anything like *three persons in one man*, they conclude that there cannot be three persons *in one God.*

Turn your thoughts upon some of the various ways in which theological writers have attempted to model this doctrine according to analogy. This survey will clearly illustrate the influence of analogical reasoning; and will also account for it, that men are predisposed to depend upon some particular parts of Scripture to the neglect of other parts. For when, by means of some supposed analogy, they become prepossessed in favor of a particular scheme, they will be ready to seize upon everything which gives it support, and to overlook or set aside everything which seems repugnant to it.

Consider, first, the attempt of the Sabellians to make the doctrine before us conformable to analogy. They saw that a Trinity, or a threefold distinction of some sort respecting God, is plainly brought to view in Scripture. But as there is nothing in human nature or human society like a trinity of persons in one being; they imagined that a trinity of *offices*, or a trinity of *manifestations* is all which the sacred writers intend to teach. By this they brought the doctrine to bear a manifest analogy to the case which often occurs, of a man acting in several different offices or relations, or developing his character in different ways. So gratified are Sabellians with this analogical sense of trinity, and so fond of maintaining it, that they disregard the plainest import of a great proportion of the texts, which relate to the subject, and substitute a very forced and unnatural interpretation; as I shall undertake to show more particularly in a subsequent Lecture. Their reason for preferring this unnatural, forced interpretation is, that it makes the doctrine agree with analogy. For the sake of this darling point, they seem willing to submit to any difficulties and absurdities.

Arians, finding this analogy unsatisfactory, adopt another. They hold that the Son and Holy Spirit are *created* beings, and instruments of divine power, as Moses and Aaron were. Their trinity is *God, and two dependent beings* produced by his power, and endued by him with distinguished intellectual and moral attributes. Thus they bring the doctrine within the compass of common analogy, that is, the analogy of God and created beings.

But some prefer a different analogy still. As the Bible frequently calls Christ the Son of God, and speaks of the Father as begetting the Son; they conclude, as I have before noticed, that the relation of the Father and the Son is exactly analogical to the relation of a human father and son. Arians generally choose the analogy of the *creation* of a finite, dependent being in the common way. These last choose the analogy of *literal sonship*. The chief propagator of this notion shows what is the groundwork of his reasoning, when he asks, "whether any man of candor can say, that the sense he has given to the terms Son of God, is not the highest sense which can possibly be given them, consistent with analogy." Here you see the basis of the scheme. You must not go beyond analogy. — As to the human nature of Christ in connection with the superior spirit, both the forementioned sects make it analogous to the union of the body and soul in man. The one believe that a superior spirit *created* as other rational beings are, — the other, that a superior spirit *produced in a peculiar manner*, was, instead of a human soul, united to a body. Both reject the doctrine of the union of Christ's original, divine spirit with a real and perfect man, not because there is any impossibility or absurdity in it, for there is none; but because it is so distant from any analogy which their experience has furnished. The scheme which they adopt gratifies their curiosity with a partial, though not a complete analogy. Although their hypothesis of the union of a superior spirit to a human body does by no means account for the properties and actions which Christ exhibited, or for the manner in which Scripture speaks of him; they still cleave to it, because it does not carry them away from all analogy. The analogy which the Docetae seem to have respected, was that of spirits under the

former dispensation, assuming temporarily, for some special purpose, a human *shape* or *appearance*. That Christ should put on such an appearance they think more analogous to certain manifestations formerly made to the people of God, than that he should become a *real man*. But the boldest contenders for analogy are the Socinians. As the Bible represents Christ to be a man, they insist upon a complete analogy between him and other men. There must, in their view, be an analogy with respect to his birth; that is, he must, like every other man, have a human father, as well as mother. And if any part of Scripture stands against this analogy, it must be rejected as spurious. There must, according to their scheme, be an analogy respecting the constitution of his person. As other men are constituted merely of a human soul and body; so it must be with Christ. If he has superior wisdom, it must be wholly by the same inspiration, which gave wisdom to the prophets. If he has power and dominion, it must be like the power and dominion of Moses and David. His death must be merely the death of a martyr. It can be nothing more than a testimony to the truth of what he had taught for the benefit of men. Whatsoever he does, and whatsoever the Bible says concerning him, must be so understood as not to violate the common analogy of human nature.

Thus men are forever feeling after some analogy, by which to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity, and particularly the character of Christ; and thus they forsake the safe guidance of revelation.

If we attend to the word of God, and receive it in its plain, unadulterated sense, we shall perceive that, in regard to the character and work of the Messiah, all analogy fails.

In the first place, his relation to God the Father has no real and strict analogy. It is in various respects unlike the relation of any created being to God. The relation of a created being to God commences in time. But Christ was with God in the beginning. The relation of a creature originates in the derivation of his being from God. But the relation which Christ, considered as the Logos, bears to the Father, rests primarily upon his participa-

tion of the same divine nature. So that it is the relation of one who is essentially equal, and, in respect to nature, identical. Whereas the relation of every created being to God, is the relation of one essentially and infinitely inferior.

The relation of Christ to the Father has no strict analogy to the relation, which any created being bears to another. The relations among created beings are indeed made use of to set forth the relation of Christ to the Father; as for example, the relation of a son, and a servant. But Christ does not strictly stand in the relation of a human son to his father, or of a human servant to his master; although these relations make known some of the properties or effects of Christ's relation to the Father. The Bible makes an essential difference between the peculiar relation of a son, and that of a servant; and represents the one as exclusive of the other. If then Christ were a servant in this appropriate sense, it would be incompatible with his being a son; or if he were a son, it would be incompatible with his being a servant. But he is spoken of as both a servant and a son; which is sufficient to show, that he is neither the one nor the other in the strict and literal sense. In other words, there is no literal and strict analogy between the relation of Christ to his father, and that of a human son to his father, or of a servant to his master. Though some of the effects and circumstances of the relation may be similar, the nature and ground of it are materially different.

Secondly. The peculiar *office* of Christ has no real and strict analogy. Though various intelligent beings exercise benevolence, or labor to promote the happiness of others; yet none, besides Christ, ever exercised benevolence in the way of making a true and proper atonement for sin. Many have, for the benefit of others, endured much evil not deserved according to civil law. But no moral agent, except Christ, ever endured, either for his own improvement, or for the benefit of others, what he did not deserve, in other words, what was not just and right, according to divine law. Many have employed the created nature given them by God, for the good of others. But the voluntary assumption of a created nature by Christ, for the very purpose of becoming

capable of promoting the good of sinners by vicarious sufferings, is a thing never known before or since. Perfectly holy beings have honored the law of God by obedience to its precepts; and transgressors by suffering its penalty. But in no instance, except that of Christ, did any one, perfectly obedient to the law, ever honor it by suffering. I might multiply instances. But it is sufficient for my purpose just to show, that there is no strict analogy between the work of Christ, as a Redeemer, and that of any other being. This peculiarity results from the fact, that his relation to God and to sinners is materially different from that which any other being ever sustained, and the particular end he pursued different from what was ever pursued in any other case.

Thirdly; the constitution of the person of the Mediator is a departure from all analogy. From one class of texts, we learn that he was a true and proper man. Other texts exhibit him as possessing all the properties of Divinity. Here analogy entirely fails. In no other instance were natures and attributes, so widely different, ever united in one person. This wonderful person, with reference to one part of his character, is God, by whom all things were created. With reference to another part of his character, he, the same person, is called a child, a man. He has life in himself, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and yet he dies and is buried. He is over all, God blessed forever; and yet is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. These representations cannot apply to any other being, created or uncreated. The fact that the Scriptures make such representations of Christ, is sufficient proof that there is no analogy, as to the constitution of his person, between him and any other being.

The foregoing remarks are sufficient to answer the particular ends I have had in view.

1. They are sufficient to show that Christ is a person, and that he acts in an office, sui generis. On these subjects the language of the Scriptures is very remarkable and singular, and proves clearly, that Christ sustains a character and office altogether peculiar.

2. These remarks are sufficient to show, that other peculiarities, not here noticed, may naturally be expected; at least, that

the occurrence of them need not occasion any surprise. If the Bible represents Christ as so diverse from all other beings in the leading traits of his character; it is reasonable to suppose that other differences will follow of course.

3. The remarks I have made are sufficient to account for it very satisfactorily, that men who regulate their opinions respecting Christ by analogy, fall into one or another of the false opinions above mentioned; and they show what reason we have to be on our guard against this fruitful source of error. Every attempt we make to bring the character and work of Christ to bear a strict analogy to the character and work of any other being, is stamped with weakness, and will lead us astray from the truth. Particular instances of this have been given. But I wish to fix it in your minds as a universal maxim, that, as no attempt is made by the sacred writers, none should ever be made by us, to explain exactly the relation which Christ bears to the Father, the constitution of his person, or the office he executes, *by any analogy whatever*. Every attempt of this kind is as absurd, as an attempt to account for the miracles of Moses and of Christ by magnetism or electricity.

The principle I have endeavored to establish is one of great practical importance, as it will prepare us to receive the peculiar instruction which the Scriptures give of the Saviour, without any doubt, and to communicate it to others, without any mixture of human speculations.

LECTURE XXII.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST PROVED, AND DEFENDED AGAINST ARIANISM.

In my attempt to exhibit the character of Jesus Christ, I shall first lay before you the evidence of his true and proper *humanity.*

Now what is the evidence of humanity in other cases? How do you become satisfied, that a person with whom you have long been acquainted, is a true and proper man, and not a being of some other order? It is, you will say, by uniformly observing in him the properties and actions which belong to the human species. What these properties and actions are is obvious to all. Suppose you have a brother, with whom you have lived many years. Do you think yourself liable to misjudge respecting his belonging to the human species? You have seen that he has the shape, the senses, and motions of a man. You have seen too that he possesses the intellectual and moral faculties, which characterize the human species. This evidence satisfies you.

When we judge respecting the manhood of one whom we never saw, we rely on the testimony of competent witnesses. For example; we are convinced that Moses and Paul were real and proper men, because we have confidence in the sacred writers who call them men, and who relate those things of them, which are characteristics of human nature.

The testimony of the Scriptures respecting Christ may be arranged in the following order.

1. They often *call* him a *man.* They say that he is a *man* of

sorrows; that he is a *man* approved of God; that there is one mediator between God and man, the *man* Christ Jesus. See also Acts 17: 31. 13: 30. Heb. 10: 12.

2. He is called the *son of man*. "The son of man hath not where to lay his head." — "The son of man hath power to forgive sin." — "The son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath." — "The son of man shall be betrayed." — "Now is the son of man glorified." — "I see the son of man standing on the right hand of God."

3. It is implied in the representation of the inspired writers, that Jesus Christ had the *form* and *features* of a man. This appears from the general story of his life, as well as from those texts which declare that he was made in the likeness of men, and was found in fashion as a man.

4. It is also implied that he had all the *senses* of a man.

5. To him belonged all the *properties* and *states* which belong to man in his *animal nature*. He was hungry, thirsty, and weary. He rested. He slept. He died. He was dead.

6. He performed all the common actions of a man, as eating, drinking, walking, conversing, etc.

7. He was subject to all the *trials*, *pains*, and *sorrows* of a man.

8. He sustained human *relations*, — the relation of a son, a brother, a friend; and he exercised the affections and performed the duties belonging to those relations.

9. He had the *mind* of a man. By diligent attention to the Scriptures, and under the instruction of his parents, and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he rapidly increased in wisdom, and at the age of twelve years gave signs of extraordinary improvement. He knew things in the natural and in the spiritual world, *as a man*. He had a human memory, judgment, and imagination. His intellectual and mental habits were human. There is as satisfactory evidence that he had a human mind, as that he had a human body. And to suppose that he had a human mind in appearance only, but not in reality, implies as heavy a charge of deception against him, and against his biog-

raphers, as to suppose that he had only the appearance of a body.

All the above mentioned positions are established by the simple history of Christ, written by plain, honest men, who were under the greatest advantages to know the truth, and were secured against all liability to mistake, by the Spirit of God. If we take the inspired volume for our guide, we shall be as fully satisfied, that Jesus Christ was a real and proper man, as that Moses or Paul was so. I mean now to be understood in the most obvious and perfect sense. I mean to say Christ was a man in every respect and in every degree. Everything bodily and mental which constitutes a perfect man, belonged to him. There is no danger of our going too far in ascribing real and proper manhood to Christ. And when we assert the manhood of Christ so strongly, we are in no danger of interfering with any other truth. Indeed our admitting the full and obvious sense of what the Scriptures declare respecting the humanity of Christ, will best prepare the way for rightly understanding what they declare respecting the higher points of his character.

No valid objection against the perfect human nature of Christ can be derived from the circumstance of his miraculous conception. If Adam was a perfect man without either a human father or mother; Jesus surely might be a perfect man without a human father. Had it pleased God to create Moses as he did Adam; we should not have considered him, on that account merely, as any the less a man. In all such cases, the question is, what the person actually was, not how he became such.

Here it might be proper to close my remarks on the humanity of Christ, did not my duty require me, according to the Statutes of this Seminary, to maintain the truths of the Christian religion in opposition to the various forms of error which have disturbed the church.

The hypothesis of the Arians is the most plausible of any, which stand in opposition to the common doctrine of Christ's humanity. The Arians hold that the man Christ Jesus was constituted by the union of the pre-existent spirit of Christ with a human body merely,

without a proper human soul; or that the Logos became man by becoming the soul of a human body.

In considering this hypothesis, I propose, in the first place, to state the principal considerations which lie against it; and then to examine the arguments by which its advocates labor to support it.

The general consideration which lies against the Arian hypothesis is, that it does not account for the actions and properties which are attributed to Christ in the Holy Scriptures. The sacred writers teach, that he uniformly exhibited the properties and performed the actions of a man. Now it is altogether unphilosophical to suppose, that properties and actions, strictly human, could have resulted from a nature so widely different from the nature of man, as the Arians represent the nature of Christ to be. Human properties and actions result from a human soul and a human body united. This union of soul and body constitutes man, and gives rise to all human properties and actions. But how can human properties and actions arise from a nature, in which a divine, omniscient spirit, as the Arians consider the spirit of Christ to be, or in which the true Godhead of Jehovah, as the modern Sabellians think, is substituted for a human soul?* From the same *corporeal* constitution the same corporeal phenomena might result. But how can sameness of corporeal constitution account for the sameness of any phenomena, except those which are purely corporeal? — How do we know that any individual person has a *human mind?* Having first become satisfied from our own consciousness and observation what are the characteristic properties of the human mind, we inquire whether these properties are uniformly exhibited by that particular person. If they are, our conclusion must necessarily be, that he has a human mind. In this manner we judge respecting all those who are described in history, as well as those with whom we have a personal acquaintance.

Unquestionably there are appropriate, characteristic properties

* I have here alluded to that form of Sabellianism, which was adopted by Schleiermacher, and which seems to be favored by some individuals in our own country, because it is evident that the general reasoning which I use against Arianism may with equal propriety, be used against this modern form of Sabellianism.

of a human mind, as well as of a human body. When a body exhibits certain properties, we conclude, without any doubt, that it is the body of a man. When a mind exhibits certain phenomena, we conclude with equal certainty, that it is the mind of a man. We judge as easily and as surely in one case, as in the other. Now if the properties and actions of Jesus Christ were such, as led those who knew him to regard him as a man, and such as would lead us, in any case, to conclude that the subject of them is in all respects human; why should we not form the same conclusion here?

The Arian hypothesis not only fails of accounting for the properties and actions of the man Christ Jesus, but is inconsistent with them. The common phenomena of a divine, omniscient spirit united with a human body, must be extremely diverse from the phenomena of the same body united to a human soul — as really diverse, as the nature of a divine, omniscient spirit is from the nature of a human spirit.

But after this general view, I must proceed to urge several particular considerations against the Arian scheme.

First; I argue against it, from the circumstances of *the childhood of Christ.* It is a fact which few will call in question, that the child Jesus, like other children, received instruction from his parents; that when he began to read and hear the word of God, he had but an imperfect understanding of it; and that it was by means of the pious instructions which he enjoyed, accompanied with a special divine blessing, that his mind was gradually though rapidly improved, so that at the age of twelve he had attained to a degree of knowledge, which astonished those around him.

This general fact respecting the childhood of Jesus is clearly proved by the two following texts: Luke 2: 40. "And the child *grew* and *waxed strong* in spirit, filled with wisdom;" ver. 52. "And Jesus *increased* in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." In the first of these verses, the same is said of Jesus, as was said in the preceding chapter of John the Baptist. Doubtless the signification of the terms in both cases is the same. Ascertain what it was for *John* to wax strong in spirit, and you ascertain what it was for *Jesus* to wax strong in spirit. The phrase

implies mental improvement — growth in knowledge and virtue. This sense of the phrase as applied to Christ, is confirmed by the other passage quoted; "Jesus *increased* in wisdom." Here we have positive evidence in support of the statement above made respecting the childhood of Jesus. Add to this, that none of the inspired writers furnish the least evidence against it.

But how totally inconsistent is this with the hypothesis of the Arians! Can an omniscient mind, such as they hold the mind of Christ to have been, need or receive instruction? Can that same almighty spirit, by whom all things were made, be said to wax strong? Can that same mind, in which dwelt the fulness of divine wisdom, increase in wisdom? Can that spirit, which possessed the fulness of divine excellence before the foundation of the world, grow in favor with God?

There is no way to render the Arian hypothesis consistent, in any degree, with the simple story of the Evangelists respecting the childhood of Jesus, but by supposing that the appearances which Jesus exhibited of childlike docility, and of increasing in knowledge and moral worth, were deceptive; or else by supposing that the preëxistent spirit of Christ *lost* its fulness of divine knowledge and strength, by becoming incarnate — that it underwent such a mighty change, that those intelligent and active powers, which were competent to create a universe, were all reduced to the compass of an infant's mind. According to this view of the subject, the humiliation of Christ consisted chiefly, not in the assumption of human nature into connection with his superior spirit, but in the transformation of that superior spirit into the soul of an infant.

Secondly; I urge against the Arian hypothesis all those texts which declare Christ to be a man, the seed of Abraham, the son of David, etc. I connect these together, because they undoubtedly mean the same thing. When the Scriptures represent Christ as the seed of Abraham and of David, they represent him as of the same species with them — a man descended from Abraham and David. If they were human, so was he. Determine the constituent parts of their humanity, and you determine the con-

stituent parts of his. The question then returns; what is a human being, a man? Now it is certain that when any one speaks of a man, as David, or Paul, he does not mean a body without a mind, nor does he mean a body of some other species; nor does he mean a mind of some other order. The body of a man is and must be a human body. The mind of a man is and must be a human mind — human in all its faculties, and in its modes of acting.

But according to the Arian hypothesis, those texts which represent Jesus of Nazareth to be a man, the son of man, the seed of Abraham and of David, must be understood in an unnatural and strange sense. Jesus was a man, and the son of man; but not really and properly so. He had nothing in common with the nature of man, but the animal part. As to mind, the chief constituent of man, he was not human. While human nature, in every other instance, consists of a human mind united with a human body; the human nature of Christ consisted merely of a human body. The only mind united with this body, was a divine, omniscient mind. As an intelligent, moral being, he was not man. Consequently, no intelligent or moral action or property could be justly predicated of him, as a man; in other words, no moral action or property of his could be human.

My third argument against the Arian scheme is drawn from the fact that Christ was *strengthened by an angel.* Luke 22: 43. "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him." This took place when Jesus was in great dejection and anguish of mind. The account implies, that the weakness and distress which called for the friendly aid of an angel, was chiefly mental. This fact can in no way be reconciled with the scheme of the Arians. They consider the Logos to be the highest of created beings. Dr. Clarke, and all those who adopt the substance of his theory, consider the mind or spirit of Christ as omnipotent and divine, though derived from God the Father. According to their belief, this divine, omnipotent spirit became the mind or soul of Jesus — the only intelligent or moral nature which he had. His power, except that which was purely corporeal, was the power of

the Logos, that almighty spirit by whom all things were made. But how could the Lord Jesus Christ, considered in this high character, need the assistance of an angel? How could he receive strength from a being, who was created and supported by his own power? How could an accession of power be imparted from a created being to him who created him? All things were not only made, but sustained by Christ. While he was at Gethsemane, as well as at all other times, his unchangeable power supported the angels, and gave them all the power they possessed. And yet one of them came to strengthen him! — a creature to strengthen the Creator!

The fact of Christ being strengthened by an angel, can never be made consistent, but by admitting, according to the plain import of Scripture, that he possessed a nature and an intelligent nature too, which was subject to weakness — a weakness which called for support from the ministration of an angel. If we consider him as a real and proper man, the appearance of an angel to strengthen him occasions no difficulty. But on the Arian principle, we shall be compelled to suppose, that there was a transformation of his superior nature; that in his incarnation, he, the divine Logos, was not only connected with a human body, but was, by that connection, deprived of his original mental power, and of all his distinguishing attributes, and changed, for a time, into a mere human soul.

My fourth argument against the Arian scheme arises from the representation of Scripture, that *the Holy Spirit was given to Christ to qualify him for his work.* I shall quote only two texts. John 3: 34. "He whom God hath sent, speaketh the words of God, for God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him." Isa. 11: 2, 3. "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." According to these representations, the Spirit was given to Christ to prepare him for his office as mediator. But if Christ, instead of a human mind, had that exalted spirit by which the worlds were

made, and to which Arians ascribe infinite knowledge and holiness; then how could he need, or be capable of receiving, such communications of the Spirit? "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding—and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." The Spirit of the Lord shall make a divine, omniscient mind of quick understanding! He shall give wisdom to that exalted mind, which before had wisdom enough to frame the worlds!

This difficulty is in a moment removed by the common doctrine of Christ's human nature. For if he was in respect to *mind* as well as body, a true and proper man, he was not only capable of receiving, but needed, the gift of the Holy Spirit to qualify him for the work which he had to perform in his human nature.

Finally. The Arian hypothesis is inconsistent with all those texts, which represent Christ as assuming our nature for the purpose of becoming a Saviour. An inspired writer says: "It behooved Christ in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." But how was Christ in all things like his brethren, if he was like them only in corporeal form? And how could his being like them in corporeal form qualify him to be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people? The office of High Priest was a spiritual office. The work of reconciliation was of a rational, moral nature. The High Priest of man must "in *all things* be made like unto his brethren"—must, in all respects, be a man; a man in respect to mind, as well as body. How could a mere human body qualify him to be under that law which was directed to mind? And how could a divine mind qualify him to be under that law which was formed for the human mind, and which, in several instances, required those peculiar duties which result from the properties and relations of a human being?

Here again the defenders of the Arian scheme, to give themselves any appearance of consistency, must suppose that the superangelic or divine mind of Jesus was, at his birth, transmuted,

literally and truly transmuted into a human mind, and so remained at least during the time of his humiliation.

To sum up the whole: I refer you again to the various direct proofs which have been given of Christ's proper humanity, that is, of his possessing a human mind, as well as a human body. All the properties he exhibited of such a mind, are manifestly inconsistent with every scheme which implies that such a mind did not belong to him.

The principal arguments in favor of the Arian hypothesis respecting the humanity of Christ, will now be considered.

I shall first remark on one or two general assertions, which have been used relative to this subject. One is this: — "If the Son of God became united to a proper man, the son and the man were two distinct intelligences, and the union would properly be a union of two persons." But who has any reason to say, that proper divinity and proper humanity may not be united in one person? Everything which is said in the Scriptures concerning Christ implies, that, however constituted, he was one person, as much so, as Moses or Paul; and the question, how he was constituted, is altogether a question of fact, and we must receive our information concerning it from the Bible. If the infallible word of God informs us, that Christ preëxisted a divine person, and, as such, acted in the creation, and government of the world, and that he afterwards became incarnate, called himself a man, and uniformly exhibited all the properties of man; the fair conclusion is, that divinity and humanity were joined in a personal union, or, that the divine Logos assumed complete human nature into a personal union with himself.

It is important to remember that the human nature of Christ never existed *by itself*, that is, in a state of separation from his divine nature. And as it never had a separate *existence*, it never had a separate *personality*. It was created, and from the first existed, in a state of union with divinity. Accordingly, to speak of *two distinct persons* being united in Christ, or to represent Christ's human nature, or the man Christ Jesus, as having had a personal existence and agency separate from the divine Logos, is totally inadmissible.

As Trinitarians have held that, in the union of divinity with humanity, the divine nature did not become human nature, or was not changed into human nature; — "it will hence appear" says an Arian writer, "that the Son of God did not *become man*, but only became united *to* a man." Yet the same writer represents the Scripture phrase, that "the word was made flesh," to mean, not that the Logos was changed into flesh, but that he became united with flesh, or assumed a body into union with himself. If this is correct, as I presume no one will doubt, then why is it not correct to express the union between the divine nature and the human nature by saying, *the Son of God became man.* The remark respects the phraseology merely.

Let us now examine some of the particular arguments which are used in support of the Arian hypothesis, "that the Son of God became man by becoming the soul of a human body."

First. "If the man Christ Jesus had been united to a second divine and self-existent person; we might reasonably expect to find in some of his discourses a distinct mention of that union. But in no instance did he intimate that he was united to any divine person but the Father."

Reply. We may with the same propriety affirm, that if the Son of God became man by becoming the soul of a human body; he would, in some of his discourses, have mentioned that union; but that he never did mention it. Let me say, however, that the proper question is not, whether any one particular part of revelation expressly mentions the union of divinity and humanity in the person of the Mediator; but whether the Bible, taken as a whole, clearly implies it.

Second Arian argument. "Had the Son of God become man in no other sense than by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, and had he been, as Trinitarians suppose, personally the independent God; he could not with any propriety have asserted his personal dependence."

This is as much as to say, that Christ cannot be divine and independent in one respect, while he is human and dependent in another respect; — and, generally, that no being can be spoken of as

one thing in one point of view, and another materially different, in another point of view. A sufficient confutation of this principle is found in the common modes of speech respecting man. Man is an intellectual being, and a corporeal being. He is spiritual, and he is material. He is mortal, and he is immortal. Every body uses and justifies such language, upon the principle that a being may be one thing in one respect, and something very different in another respect. The advocates of the Arian theory find it necessary to resort to this very principle. They speak of Christ, as the Son of God by whom the worlds were made, and as the seed of Abraham, born in Judea in the days of Herod. How strange to say, that Christ was before Abraham — that he was in the beginning with God; and yet that he was the seed of Abraham! How do they reconcile these different views? Precisely upon the principle which we adopt; namely, that different properties or aspects of character may be predicated of Christ, considered in different respects. Christ, whom in respect to his highest character they hold to have been the Son of God, a divine being, before the world was, "is," they say, "the seed of Abraham only according to the flesh, or in respect to the flesh." So Trinitarians represent the Lord Jesus Christ as, in one respect, God, almighty and everlasting; and, in another respect, a being of yesterday, dependent, and of limited power.

The third Arian argument to be examined is allied in principle to the ancient error of the Docetae. "Angels were called men, because they appeared in the likeness of men, that is, in an embodied state. And if angels were called men, because of a transient or occasional residence in bodies of human form, the Son of God might properly be called the son of man, on account of his permanent residence in a human body."

Now if this argument proves anything, it proves that Christ no more possessed a real and proper humanity, than those angels, who occasionally assumed the appearance of men. In opposition to this, I maintain that, in the case of the angels, the mere appearance of men, without the reality, was sufficient to answer the purpose intended, and that a supposition like this well accords with the ac-

count given of the transaction. Whereas, in the case of Christ, there was a necessity, resulting from the nature of his work, that he should be a man, not in appearance only, but in *reality*. — There is another obvious difference. Those angels exhibited none of the phenomena of human nature, except *transiently* appearing and acting as men. And we may reasonably suppose that appearance was temporarily assumed, without any particle of real human nature, for the sake of rendering their message less appalling to those who were to receive it. But Christ *uniformly* and *permanently* exhibited all the properties of real human nature, those of mind, as well as those of body. So that there is good reason to believe, that the angels were, at particular times, called *men*, purely on account of the human form in which they appeared, without supposing they really possessed human nature. While there is not the least room to believe, that Christ was called man for any reason, but for possessing the perfect reality of human nature.

The fourth Arian argument is this: — "The Scripture accounts of the incarnation of the Son of God contain no intimation, that he took to himself a *true body and a reasonable soul;* but the contrary is plainly suggested. 'The word was made *flesh*.' 'God had sworn to David, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the *flesh*, he would raise up Christ.' 'Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the *flesh*, Christ came.' Why are these phrases inserted, but to teach us that our Lord is the seed of Abraham and David only according to the flesh, or in respect to the flesh."

Here it becomes necessary to inquire into the Scripture use of the word *flesh*. For if its sense is found to be various, and especially if the prevailing sense is different from that which is assumed in this argument of Arians; we cannot admit that the argument is conclusive.

A careful examination of the various texts where the word *flesh* is found, will show, that the instances are comparatively few, in which it can be supposed to denote the *body merely*, although this is its literal sense. Sometimes it signifies man, considered as impotent and frail. Frequently if not generally, when used in appli-

cation to moral subjects, it signifies human nature, considered as corrupt. "The fruits of the flesh are these," says the Apostle, — enumerating various sins which result from the moral corruption of man. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," says Christ, — contrasting flesh with spirit, or spiritual excellence, and showing that the production of man's depraved nature is a depraved nature likewise.

In very many, if not most places, the word flesh is used to denote *man*, or *mankind merely*. "All flesh had corrupted his way." "Unto thee shall all flesh come." "Let all flesh bless his holy name forever." "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." "All flesh shall see the salvation of God." In these and similar places, "all flesh" means all *men*. In such passages, man is denominated from his visible part. Or he is denominated flesh, because that word is significant of the visible state or condition in which he is now placed. Other senses of the word somewhat different might be pointed out.

If then the word *flesh* has such a variety of senses, and if such are the senses most prevalent in the Scriptures; what right has any man to reason upon the supposition, that in the passages referred to by the Arians, it means a body merely, in distinction from a mind? Whether the word flesh has this signification or not, is the question to be considered. Instead of taking it for granted that it *has* this signification, we ought to weigh well the particular reasons which show that it *has not*.

The first is, that in Scripture use, this is not its most common signification. The second is, that there is nothing in the context which requires this signification. The third is, that all which the Scriptures teach concerning Christ in his incarnate state, leads to a contrary result. He is represented to be a man; is called a man; is called so emphatically; he exhibits uniformly all the properties of a man, both bodily and mental, and performs a work which most evidently requires the reality of human nature. Now if everything, which characterizes the Son of God incarnate, shows that he was indeed a man; then the text which declares that "the word was made flesh," or that he came into an incar-

nate state, must signify that he *became man*, or came into a state of manhood; and the text which declares that he was the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, must signify that he was so in respect of his *human nature*, or, considered as a man.

Now the following argument is of the same kind with that of the Arians above mentioned, and is just as conclusive. The Scripture declares, that Christ poured out his *soul* unto *death;* that his *soul* was made an *offering for sin.* Soul in these places *must* mean *soul* or *spirit merely*, in distinction from body. Therefore the sacrifice of Christ consisted in his offering up a *soul* without a body.

The personal identity of the Son of God and the son of man has been urged in favor of the Arian hypothesis. Much pains has been taken to prove, what no man in his senses ever thought of denying, that the Son of God and the son of man is one and the same person; and this personal identity has been supposed to be inconsistent with the common position of Trinitarians, that "the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul." "The orthodox doctrine," says Purves, "ascribes two natures to Christ, each of which, separately considered, has all the properties necessary to constitute personality." "This," he says "is very evident; for a complete person is said to take a true body and a reasonable soul. Now every one must know, that a true body and a reasonable soul is a complete person. There must therefore, according to this doctrine, be not only a union of natures, but also of persons; so that the Lord Jesus Christ consists of two persons, or else two persons are one person."

The grand flaw in this argument, as I have before intimated, is the supposition, that the human nature of Christ did in fact once exist separately from his divine nature. It is readily granted, that the human nature of Christ, consisting of a true body and reasonable soul, must have constituted by itself a complete person, *if it had ever existed by itself, separately from the divine nature.* But it never had that *separate existence;* of course, it never had a *separate personality.* And if his human nature nev-

er had a separate and distinct personality, there was no such thing as the uniting of two distinct persons. How then is the position, that "the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul," inconsistent with the acknowledged truth, that the Son of God and the son of man is one and the same person? How can it be asserted to be inconsistent, unless it can be shown to be impossible for a personal union to be constituted between a divine nature and a human nature? But who can prove this impossibility? Who has ever offered any thing as evidence, but bare assertion?

The nature, consistency and practical results of this union will be more particularly considered in a subsequent Lecture.

One of the main arguments urged in support of the Arian theory is founded on the passage Phil. 2: 7, 8. "He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death." In the opinion of an Arian writer, these phrases clearly prove, that the Son of God did not become a *real man*, but only assumed a human *body*. The *likeness* and *fashion* of a man, according to this interpretation, stands in opposition to the *reality* of a man, denoting outward form or appearance only.

On this argument I shall detain you but a short time. What then are we to understand by Christ's being made in the likeness of men? Macknight says: "This does not imply that Christ had only the *appearance* of a man; for the word ὁμοιωμα often denotes sameness of nature. Schleusner renders it, "he was made a *true man*, verus homo, possessing *real human nature*, and *human properties and adjuncts*." Adam begat a son in his own *likeness*. Here sameness of nature is plainly intended, not likeness in appearance or in bodily constitution merely. "Elias was a man subject to *like* passions as we are; that is, to passions of the same kind. "The second commandment is *like* unto the first," that is, of the *same general nature*, requiring an affection of the same kind.

When in common discourse we say that all men are *alike*, we

do not mean to point out a resemblance in appearance, in contradistinction to reality, but to affirm that men are really of the same nature; of the same nature universally, unless we add some limitation, or unless some limitation arises from the circumstances of the case.

Thus then the matter stands. The Apostle asserts that Christ was made in the likeness of men. We contend that the likeness mentioned, denotes a real resemblance, a sameness of nature, mental as well as corporeal. And in support of this position, we cite other texts; one of which asserts, that "in all things it behooved Christ to be made like to his brethren;" and others which, in various forms, and very explicitly, call him a man, not a man's appearance, or a man's body, but a *man;* and ascribe to him all the properties of a man, consisting of body and soul.

I shall only add here, that if the principle of exposition which the Arians adopt on this passage, be admitted, it will prove the doctrine of the Docetae, that Christ had only the appearance or similitude of a *body*, and not a real body; and that the human properties he exhibited, and all his actions and sufferings as a man, were only in appearance.

LECTURE XXIII.

DEDUCTIONS FROM THE PROPER HUMANITY OF CHRIST.

I DEEM it unnecessary to pursue any further, the proof of Christ's real and proper manhood, or the confutation of the contrary theory. I shall hereafter consider it as an established truth, that Christ was truly a man. I shall now make use of this truth for the purpose of solving some apparent difficulties attending the subject of Christ's character, and illustrating, in some important instances, the propriety and consistency of the different modes of representation found in the Scriptures.

The main point which I have in view is this: — If Christ is a real and proper man, then it is perfectly fit and consistent to speak of him as such, and freely to attribute to him all human properties, relations, and actions. If it is consistent to say, that Christ walked, ate, slept, and lived in poverty, *as a man;* it is equally consistent to say, that *he acknowledged his dependence on God, and prayed, and suffered and died*, as a man. For a state of dependence on God, praying to God, suffering and dying, are just as much properties or adjuncts of *man*, as walking, eating, and sleeping — and no more. In other words, his being a *man* places him in a condition to be dependent, to pray, to suffer and die, in the same manner, and on the same principle, as it places him in a condition to walk, eat, and sleep. All these are things which equally belong to a man. And they must equally belong to Christ in the capacity of a man.

It may be objected to this, that Christ's superior or divine nature must make an important difference between him and other

men; so that human properties and relations cannot be predicated of him in the same sense, in which they are predicated of them.

But if, notwithstanding that superior nature, Christ is, as we have seen, a real and proper man; then, notwithstanding that superior nature, human properties and relations may be predicated of him, *as* a man. If a superior nature may be so united to the human nature, as to leave that human nature unchanged, that is, not transformed by the union into some other nature; then clearly the same human nature may be the subject of human properties. And if *any* human properties and relations may belong to the human nature of Christ in that state of union with a superior nature; for the same reason, and in the same sense, *all* human properties and relations may belong to it. So that any one who denies, that *all* human properties and relations may belong to Christ, notwithstanding his superior nature, must deny that his superior nature can be united to human nature, without an essential *transformation* of that human nature. But if any man takes this ground, and asserts that it is impossible for a superior nature to assume human nature into a personal connection with itself, without destroying or changing the peculiar properties of the human nature; then I must demand of him the proof of that impossibility. And while he is urging reasons, to show that such a union of a superior nature with human nature is impossible, I will undertake to show, by similar reasons, and with equal clearness, that the union of a spiritual and corporeal nature in man is impossible; and especially that the union which Arians assert of the superior nature of Christ with a human *body* is impossible.

In the investigation of such a subject as this, it is highly important to guard against those misapprehensions, which arise from an ambiguous or indeterminate use of words. I would therefore remark that, whenever I say that the human nature of Christ had such and such properties, or that such relations and properties may be predicated of it, I do not mean to signify that the human nature of Christ exists *by itself*, and is, by itself, or separately, the subject of the properties ascribed to it. This form of speech is adopted for the sake of convenience; and is intended to be of the

same import with this; — that Christ is a *man*, and that various properties belong to him as a man.

I have another general remark. On many accounts, the human nature of Christ was manifestly of great importance. In the human nature, he had a great work to accomplish. The exhibition of himself in the human nature, and acting in that assumed character and office to which the human nature was essential, was his great object while he abode on earth. It is no wonder therefore, that he so often speaks of himself, as the son of man, and is so constantly presented before us, *as a man*, in the Evangelical history.

Before considering more particularly certain difficulties, which have been supposed to attend the doctrine of Christ's real and proper manhood, I shall add a few words respecting the difficulty which has been made so much of by anti-trinitarians, namely, that our theory makes Christ to consist of two persons, one human, the other divine; whereas, the Scriptures everywhere speak of him as one person.

Now I maintain, that our theory represents Christ to be one person, as really as any other theory; although *we ascribe to that one person a greater diversity of properties, than those who hold to an opposite theory.* Here we find the source of the mistake, into which those men have been betrayed who urge the above mentioned difficulty. Because we ascribe to Christ a greater diversity of properties, than have been known in any other case to belong to one person; they infer, that our theory makes Christ to consist of two persons. Scrupulously following the infallible guidance of revelation, we predicate of Christ all *human* attributes and works, and all *divine* attributes and works. The former we predicate of him *as man*, the latter, *as God.* In this way we predicate of one complex person a greater variety of properties, than our opponents think *can belong* to one person. But I ask, who is able to set limits to the number, or the diversity of properties, which one complex person may possess? No man has a right to *assume* that the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ is an impossibility. And if such a union may take place, as the

language of Scripture plainly implies, then all the properties and acts which belong to human nature, or result from it, as well as those which belong to the divine nature, may be justly predicated of that one complex person, Jesus Christ. This is obviously involved in the union of two natures in one person. Just as the union of body and mind in one human person implies that all corporeal properties and acts, as well as those which are mental, are to be attributed to that one person. Whether there is in fact such a union of natures in the person of Christ, is a point on which revelation must decide. How it does decide, and what is the foundation of the common theory, is an inquiry which has already been considered in part, and which will, in its proper place, be considered more particularly.

For the present I shall make it my object to elucidate, as clearly as possible, this single point, namely; the *propriety of predicating of Christ, as one person*, those sufferings which belonged appropriately to his human nature. This important principle may be defended against the affirmations of Arians, and of other opposers of orthodoxy, in the two following ways; first, by *analogy;* secondly, by *other Scriptural forms of speech respecting Christ, which rest on the same principle.*

I argue, first, from *analogy;* that is, the analogy of human nature. And it is allowed, by all, that analogy is of special use in showing the futility of speculative objections. Now, the language in common use respecting man rests upon the same principle, and is liable to the same objections, with the language of the Trinitarian theory.

Man is constituted of body and mind. In every human being, these two principles, which are in their nature totally diverse from each other, are so united, as to constitute *one person.* And yet none of the peculiar properties of either of these constituent parts are identified or confounded with those of the other, or in any way essentially changed by the union. The body remains completely a body still, with all corporeal properties. The mind remains a mind or spirit, with all mental or spiritual properties. Mental affections and acts are not transformed into corporeal; nor corpo-

real into mental. But in consequence of this divinely constituted union of body and mind, all the properties and acts peculiar both to body and to mind, are spoken of as belonging to *one and the same person;* they are all properly attributed to that person; although it is still perfectly obvious from the nature of the case, that some of them relate appropriately to the body, and some to the mind.

All this appears sufficiently plain. But if you wish it to be made still more plain, attend carefully to the following illustrations.

Recollecting, reasoning, and repenting, are *mental* acts. Yet we ascribe them to *the man*, constituted of body and mind. We say, *Peter* remembers, reasons, and repents. Justice, benevolence and pity are *qualities* of mind; but we say *the man* is just, benevolent and pitiful. Here the nature of the case shows, that these acts and qualities cannot belong to *body as such*. But they belong to the *person*, consisting of body and mind. Still it is obvious, that they are predicated of the person *with respect* to his *mind*. Were it not for the union of the body with the mind in one person, they could be predicated of mind only, considered simply by itself. But in consequence of that union, they are predicated of the one complete person, thus constituted.

In the same way *corporeal* properties and acts are ascribed to man as one complex person. Walking and running are corporeal acts. The mind has an agency in them, but it is not the mind that walks or runs. These are appropriately actions of the body. They result from the powers of the body. They are efforts made by the members of the body. Still these bodily acts are predicated of the *man*, the whole *person*, constituted of body and mind. It is *Peter* that walks and runs. These actions are completely his. If there is any advantage or disadvantage in them, the advantage or disadvantage is his. But they are predicated of the man Peter with *respect* to his *body*. Though attributed to the man, they are appropriate to his *corporeal* part, not to his mental part. — The mind is immaterial. But God said to Adam, "dust thou art;" he said it to the *man*, the *person*, but he said it with *respect* to his *body*, not with respect to his spirit.

In these instances and in others too many to be cited, we predicate the most corporeal properties of a man, just as we do the most spiritual.

It is manifest, that the different natures of which man is constituted, greatly enlarge the number and variety of properties and actions of which he is capable. If he were mind simply, he could not be the subject of any of those properties and actions, which are peculiar to the body. Nor could he be the subject of any of the mental properties and actions, which are now predicated of him, if he were simply corporeal.

The common orthodox theory teaches, that the person of Christ is constituted of divinity and humanity; that he who was God became man, by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul. This union of divinity and humanity, which I consider to be a well supported fact, is in my view liable to no valid objection. The Arians argue, that it is inconsistent with the representations of Scripture, that the Son of God suffered and died. They say the Godhead is incapable of suffering; and if it was only the man Jesus that suffered, it is altogether improper to predicate suffering of the Son of God. To obviate this difficulty and to make it proper to predicate suffering of Christ, they suppose that the spiritual being that became incarnate, was a derived and dependent being, and hence capable of suffering, though far superior to all other created beings.

But what occasion is there for such a hypothesis as this? According to the principle above laid down, which all must acknowledge to be true in relation to man, it is perfectly proper, according to the Trinitarian theory, to attribute to *that complex person*, *Christ*, those sufferings which appertained to his human nature. In his original character as the Logos, the second person in the Trinity, he was indeed incapable of suffering. The suffering which he endured appertained to him *as man*. If it is ever predicated of him as God, it is as *God incarnate*. Still suffering is predicated of him, as *one person*, consisting of divinity and humanity. And when the Scripture in various forms teaches, that *Christ*, the *Son of God suffered*, it speaks with the utmost propriety; it expresses the truth in lan-

guage perfectly natural, common and intelligible. Do you ask then, who was in fact the *sufferer?* I answer, it was Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Do you ask, whether the divine nature suffered? I answer, that divinity *itself*, divinity *as such*, is incapable of suffering, — as incapable of *suffering*, as of *dying*. Nor does the Bible any more intimate, that the divine nature of Christ suffered, than that his divine nature *died*. Do you ask then, whether suffering is to be predicated of the human nature merely? I answer, the human nature of Christ did not constitute the *person* of Christ. In strict propriety, we predicate suffering of *the person, the one complex person*. Some choose to say that the human nature of Christ was the subject of suffering. Their meaning doubtless is, that Christ suffered *in* his human nature, or *as man*. But the true Scripture position is, that Christ, the Saviour of the world suffered. But this does not imply that he suffered in his *divine* nature, or *as God*. Do you ask what leads me to conclude that he did not suffer *as God*, I answer, that I come to this conclusion from the nature of the case.

Do any think it a misrepresentation to say, that Christ the Son of God suffered, unless he suffered in his highest nature; my reply is, that this is no more a misrepresentation, than the language which the Bible everywhere uses, and which we all use, respecting man. Man is *mortal*. Do we mean that he is mortal *as to his spiritual nature?* Do we mean that his *mind* is mortal? No one can mean this. But because the expression does not mean that man is mortal in his spiritual part, but only in his bodily part; is the expression therefore a misrepresentation?

These and other expressions which occur so often in Scripture, and in common discourse, rest on the same general principle, and are liable to the same exceptions, with the language of the orthodox theory stated above. For if we may properly predicate of man actions and qualities, which do not appertain to his intelligent or moral nature, and which are predicated of him solely with reference to his corporeal part; certainly we may, with equal propriety, predicate actions and properties of Christ, which do not appertain to his divine nature. And if it is incorrect to say, the Son of God

suffered, when we do not mean that he suffered in his divine nature; then it is incorrect to say, man is mortal, when we do not mean that he is mortal in his spiritual part; and it was incorrect to say that Adam was *dust*, when the declaration applied not to his spirit, but to his body only.

It must then, I think, be very clear, that the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ renders it perfectly proper to attribute to that *person* all that is peculiar to his *human nature;*—just as we attribute to *man* all that is peculiar to his *body*, because his body is united to his mind so as to constitute one person. It must, in every instance, be determined from the nature of the case, whether the property or action predicated of Christ, is predicated of him in relation to his humanity, or to his divinity. This we are under the best advantages to do, because we previously know what are the attributes of God, and what are the attributes of man. We have only to inquire, whether any particular attribute which is predicated of Christ, is a divine or a human attribute. If it is a divine attribute, then it is predicated of Christ *as God*, or in respect to his Godhead. If it is a human attribute or property, then it is predicated of Christ *as a man*, or in respect to his humanity. Accordingly, before any one may conclude from those texts which declare that the Son of God suffered, that he suffered in his divine nature, he must show that suffering may belong to God *as God.* If, without showing this, he takes upon him to affirm that, because it is said the Son of God suffered, therefore he suffered in his highest nature; he does it for want of consideration. For he might just as well affirm, that because God said to Adam, thou art *dust*, therefore his spiritual part was dust; or that because a man eats and walks, his mind eats and walks.

I now close the argument from analogy. From this argument we conclude, that those texts which represent the sufferings of the Son of God, by no means imply that he suffered in his divine nature; and that the common language of Trinitarians on this subject is justified by principles universally acknowledged, and is liable to no objections, which may not be equally urged against the language constantly employed respecting man.

I might quote passages from the most respectable authors, which recognize, though briefly, the principle asserted above. But I shall content myself with two quotations. The first is from Ernesti, quoted by Storr in his Bib. Theol. Vol. 2, p. 157. He says, "When divine attributes are ascribed to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, the case is precisely the same, as when predicates are affirmed of the whole man, which belong only to his soul, or only to his body." The next is from Bishop Pearson. He mentions "the intimate conjunction and union of the divine and human nature in the person of the Son;" and then says, "hereby those attributes which properly belong to the one are given," that is ascribed, "to the other." The meaning is obvious; but it would be more exact to say, those attributes which belong to the one or the other of the two natures, are ascribed to *the one person*, in whom the two natures are united.

Here I might show that several peculiarities, in addition to those already referred to, naturally result from the complex nature of Christ; particularly, that different views are in some instances to be taken of him relative to the same subject; as, for example, he governs the world by his own right as Creator; but this dominion is committed to him *as man*, or rather *as Mediator;* — he is Judge by original right as God, but is constituted Judge, and qualified for the work of judgment, as Mediator.

In the discussion of the subject before us, I have undertaken to show the propriety of attributing to the one complex person, Christ, those sufferings which appertained to him in his human nature, or were endured by him as man. My first argument was drawn from analogy, the analogy of human nature generally. Observe however, that I do not rest on analogy for the support of the position, that there is a personal union of the divine and the human nature in Christ, or that suffering is to be predicated of Christ. But considering it as demonstrable from the Scriptures, that there is such a union, and that the Son of God, thus constituted, did actually suffer for sinners, I have, I think, made it apparent, that the common position of the orthodox, that Christ suffered in his human

nature, not in his divine, is liable to no objections, which may not as well be urged against the language everywhere in use respecting man; and that the manner in which we understand the Scriptures on this subject is altogether similar to that, in which we understand the terms employed in common discourse.

I now proceed to say, secondly, that the propriety of predicating of the one person, Jesus Christ, those sufferings which belonged appropriately to his human nature, may be defended against the exceptions of Arians, by other Scriptural forms of speech respecting Christ, which plainly rest on the same principle. Those who oppose our theory must, in some plain cases, unavoidably adopt the very principle which we have adopted, in explaining the language of Scripture relative to the person of Christ.

I give the following as examples. Matt. 8: 24, 25. "And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; — but Jesus was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him." At a different time, Mark relates, that "Jesus was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow." Now who was it that was asleep in the ship? I put the question to Arians. They certainly must answer, *it was Jesus Christ*, the Son of God. But did that divine Almighty spirit by whom all things were sustained, *fall asleep?* Was that divine Being, in whom dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, asleep on a pillow? What would they say? I know nothing which they have said; for they have very fortunately overlooked the difficulty. But what must they say? Certainly they could not suppose that the omniscient, all powerful Son of God, that divine spirit by whom the worlds were made, was asleep on a pillow. They would doubtless resort to the principle which they admit in another case. "Christ was the seed of Abraham," they say, "according to the flesh, or in respect to the flesh, meaning his body merely." Here they must say the same. Jesus was asleep in *respect* to the *flesh*, or, in respect to his animal nature. And should they say, as they might, that the nature of the case shows that the Scriptures could not affirm this of Christ with respect to his divine omniscient mind, but only with respect to

his animal nature; I should be entirely satisfied with the answer. And then I should add the plain conclusion, that if sleeping on a pillow, which is predicated of Jesus Christ, is to be understood as applicable only to his corporeal nature, we may, with equal truth, consider *suffering*, which is predicated of the same person, as applicable only to his human nature. If they confine sleep to his corporeal nature, because his divine, preëxistent mind was incapable of sleep; we also confine suffering to his humanity, because his Divinity, as such, was incapable of suffering. If they think it consistent to predicate sleep of the person of Christ, when it took place only in his corporeal nature; we think it equally consistent to predicate suffering of the same person, when it took place only in his human nature. And if the declaration of Scripture, that Jesus slept, affords no evidence that the exalted mind, which Arians ascribe to him, was asleep; then the declaration that *Jesus suffered*, affords no evidence that his divine, self-existent spirit suffered.*

But it is also represented in the Scriptures that Jesus the Son of God, *died*, and was *dead*. He says of himself, "I am he that was dead." Of whom was this spoken? Certainly it was spoken of Jesus Christ. He says, "I am he that was dead." But did the divine Logos, the preëxistent spirit of Christ, by whom all things were made, lose his power and activity? Did he die? Was he dead? No, Arians will say; the declaration that Jesus was dead, means no such thing. It is said of him *in respect to the flesh*. The preëxistent spirit of Christ was incapable of being dead. This I am confident is the construction, which Arians would put upon the texts which assert the death of Christ. They would consider death as predicated of Christ, not with respect to his divine, preëxistent spirit, but with respect to his human body. Surely then they cannot object to us for saying, that the Scriptures predicate suffering of Christ, not as to his divine

* Whatever is repetitious in this discussion will, I hope, be regarded as excusable. The subject is of such a nature, and has, by sophistical arguments, been involved in such obscurity, that its complete elucidation requires "line upon line, line upon line."

nature, but as to his human nature. As they would say, that the divine, preëxistent spirit of Christ could not be the subject of the death which is predicated of him; so we say, that the divine nature could not be the subject of the suffering which is predicated of him. This principle of interpretation, which our opponents will be under the necessity of applying to the Scriptures in this instance, fully justifies our interpretation of the texts which speak of the sufferings of Christ. And we no more make Christ a mere *human* Saviour, by saying that suffering was confined to his human nature, than they make him a mere *corporeal* Saviour, by saying that death was confined to his corporeal nature.

Again; the Scriptures teach that on the third day after his crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead. Here the same mode of interpretation must be adopted. For no Arians will say, that rising from the dead is predicated of that preëxistent spirit of Christ, which was incapable of dying. I might also refer to the passages which teach, that Jesus was the son of Mary; that he grew in stature; that he was hungry and thirsty; that he ate and drank; and other passages in which the same principle of construction must be admitted.

If then the Scriptures declare, that Jesus was born of Mary, that he increased in stature, that he ate and drank, that he slept, and died, and rose again; and if it is still a point which is perfectly clear, and in which Arians must agree with us, that he was not born of Mary and did not increase in stature, and did not eat and drink, and did not sleep, or die, or rise again, in respect to his divine, preëxistent spirit, but only in respect to his bodily part; certainly we cannot be charged with impropriety in saying, that he did not suffer in his divine, eternal nature, but in his human nature. And if our holding that he suffered only in his human nature makes him a mere human Saviour, — then holding that he died and rose again, not in his spiritual but in his corporeal part, makes him a mere corporeal Saviour.

It is true, that some Arians seem to hold, that the Son of God not only suffered but *died* in his own proper and original character.

But this is evidently an inadvertence in them. For it is totally inconsistent with their notion of the nature of the Logos, Christ's preëxistent spirit, to suppose that it did really *die*, and was in fact *dead*. I must therefore think that they advance what they do on this point very carelessly; and that after all their declamation to prove what is so very clear, that the Son of God died, they would be as much startled as others at the position, that the almighty *spirit* of Christ died, and was dead. Although death is everywhere predicated of Christ, they must hold that it appertained only to his corporeal part. And in holding this, they abandon the principle on which their system rests, namely, that what is predicated of Christ must be predicated of him in respect to his highest nature, his preëxistent, divine mind.

From what has been said we make the following inference. If the divine and human natures were so united in the person of Christ, that those sufferings which took place in his human nature, may properly be predicated of him, as one person; then all the dignity of his person, as God-man, goes to render his sufferings meritorious. The same reason, which renders it proper to predicate his sufferings of his person, connects the *worthiness of his sufferings* with *the worthiness of his person*. The fact that his sufferings were endured in his human nature, no more proves that they had only the merit of mere human sufferings, than it proves that they were predicated of a mere human person.

What then shall we think of the following remarks of Purves.* "By the common orthodox scheme, all mediatory acts are assigned to the human nature. It therefore appears evident, that the Trinitarian doctrine makes the Lord Jesus Christ no more than a human Saviour; and however much it may be extolled for orthodoxy, or however severely its favorers may declaim against Socinianism as a most dangerous, or perhaps in their opinion, a damnable doctrine; yet when theirs is examined, it in every respect makes Christ as much a human Saviour as that of the Socinians doth." The following is a still more remarkable specimen of the

* Humble Attempt, p. 96.

declamation which has been used against the common theory. "It cannot be admitted that God is chargeable with any imposition on mankind. And yet what short of an imposition would it be, to pretend that he so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to suffer an ignominious death for our redemption, if at the same time his Son was spared — and all the sufferings of the cross were endured by a man, to whom the Son was united, and the Son himself was as free from pain and death, as though there were no such thing as suffering and death in the universe. No possible union between the Son of God and a man could render it proper to call the sufferings and death of the man the sufferings of the Son, if it be true the Son did not suffer and die. May it not be fairly inferred from the common theory, that instead of the Son of God's dying for us, the man Christ Jesus died for the Son of God?" *

Such declamation as this can hardly require any further notice. Nor should I have rehearsed it, but for the sake of illustrating more fully the radical error of the Arian scheme. You perceive that the authors just quoted deny or entirely overlook the grand principle, which has been so particularly discussed, namely, that such is the union of the divine nature and the human nature in the person of Christ, that it is perfectly proper to attribute to him, thus constituted, all that pertained either to the human nature, or to the divine. According to this principle the Scriptures speak with all possible propriety, when they declare, that the Son of God suffered and died, although suffering and death belonged to him as a man, or took place in his human nature. The substance of all that is contained in the quotations above made is this, that the Son of God did not suffer and die, unless he suffered and died in his original character; that is, unless his preëxistent Spirit, called the Logos, suffered and died.

It is somewhat marvellous, that the authors, above quoted, should not have seen, that the Son of God could no more *die* upon their scheme, than upon ours. For certainly they did not hold

* "Bible News" by N. Worcester.

that a *spirit*, especially the omniscient spirit of Christ, as they hold the Logos to be — was dead and laid in a tomb.

The general principle which I have labored to establish, may help us to solve a difficulty, which has been in no small degree perplexing to some Trinitarians. — Christ is said not to know the day of judgment. How is this consistent with his being truly and properly God? — But, in reality, why should this be thought a difficulty so hard to be solved? If Christ is a real and proper man, why may not *limited knowledge*, as well as any other human property, be ascribed to him? In truth how could he be a man, were not his knowledge limited? — limited, I mean, considered as the knowledge of a man? A human mind, and every created mind, must be circumscribed in knowledge. If Jesus, as a human being, received instruction, and grew in knowledge; if the Spirit of God was imparted to him to make him of quick understanding; what difficulty is there in the declaration, that *as a human being*, he knew not the time of the final judgment? *As a man*, he certainly could not know it, unless it were a subject of special revelation to him. And if anything, in any part of his life, indicative of limited knowledge, may be consistent with his Godhead, why not this? Nay further, if *any* property of real humanity may belong to Christ consistently with his Divinity: why not limited knowledge?

There is no need of descending to any more particulars. The general principle is sufficiently obvious; namely, that the real humanity of Christ, shows the propriety of predicating of him, as the Scriptures do, every human attribute, action, and relation. The consistency and propriety of his being represented as dependent, as weary, hungry, asleep, praying, growing in knowledge, ignorant of the time of the last judgment, suffering, dying and dead, and rising again, rest upon the simple question, whether he *was truly a man*. And the various difficulties which are supposed to arise from those representations, may all be summed up in one, namely, the real manhood of Christ. Instead therefore of dwelling upon any particular difficulty, as that arising from Christ's being dependent, his praying, or his not knowing the judgment

day, it would be better to confine our attention to the fundamental difficulty of his *being a man.* If the Scriptures teach, that he possesses real humanity in connection with his Godhead, then he may and must possess all that is human; and every property, relation and action of man may be ascribed to him, *as a man*, without infringing his divine perfection.

I have now finished the discussion which I proposed of the doctrine of Christ's proper manhood. I have been thus particular and laborious in the discussion, for various reasons. 1. Because the doctrine is essential in Christianity, — it being indispensable that Christ should become man in order to make an atonement and save sinners. 2. Because the doctrine is of great consequence in the right interpretation of the Scriptures. A considerable part of the Bible, especially of the Evangelical history, becomes unintelligible and absurd, without admitting this doctrine. And many who seem to admit it in general terms, find perplexing difficulties here and there, because they do not admit it in its full extent, and do not follow it out into its obvious results. 3. It is plainly important to admit the just and fair sense of those parts of Scripture which exhibit Christ in his human character, in order to prepare the way for admitting the just and fair sense of those parts, which exhibit his divine character. The habit of making out a forced interpretation, or of limiting or overlooking the obvious sense, of what the Bible says respecting the humanity of Christ, will be likely to have an unfavorable influence upon us in interpreting those parts of the Bible which exhibit his Godhead. This is remarkably the case with the Arians, — who fall short of the plain and full meaning of both those texts which teach that Christ is a man, and of those which teach that he is God. They give a perverted, mangled sense to both. 4. A thorough attention to this subject is required by the particular errors which are prevalent at this day. It is important to show the Socinians, that we reason as fairly and philosophically as they do, upon those parts of revelation which declare the proper manhood of Christ, and much more fairly upon those parts which declare his Godhead. It is important also to make it manifest, that Arianism sets aside the plain

meaning of the Bible, as to both parts of the character of Christ.

To conclude. Let us accustom ourselves to read what the Bible says on this momentous subject with a candid, honest, and docile mind; guarding against every opinion which would render any part of revelation unwelcome to us, and always taking care, that the lowly character, which the Son of God condescended to assume for our salvation, do not lead us to deny or neglect the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

APPENDIX.

In the preceding Lectures, which were written more than twenty years since, and which were delivered to many successive classes of theological students, particular attention was given to the Arian hypothesis. Arians hold that Christ, the Saviour of the world, though exalted above man and angels, and endued with what they call divine perfection, was still in his preëxistent and most exalted nature, a derived and dependent being, and of course *capable of suffering*. And they make it a matter of objection against Trinitarians, that according to their scheme, the divine nature, that is, the Godhead of Christ, could not suffer; from which they infer that, on the common theory, it is totally improper to say that *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered*. We agree with them, that Christ *as God*, or in respect to *his divine nature*, could not suffer. But we are far from admitting their inference. It has, I think, been shown satisfactorily, that the language of Scripture does by no means imply, that Christ suffered in his divine nature; and that it is every way suitable to predicate suffering of *the person of Christ*, while the suffering took place in his human nature only. We have seen that the position cannot be maintained, *that whatever is predicated of Christ, must be true of each of the two natures which constitute his person.*

But of late, an attempt has been made by a distinguished individual, and partly concurred in by a few others, to engraft upon

the Trinitarian theory, the above named principle, namely, that *whatever is predicated of Christ*, must be true of him *in his whole person*, and especially in *his highest nature*. The individual referred to affirms, that the infinite, eternal spirit did, in the person of Christ, really endure an amount of suffering beyond the power of finite minds to conceive; that he suffered and died *as God*. And he thinks, that this view of the atoning sufferings of Christ is more honorable to his benevolence, and more suited to exert a salutary influence upon the minds of men, than the common doctrine.

In regard to this new scheme I will make only two or three remarks. 1. The principle on which the scheme rests cannot be maintained even by its advocates. For this principle would imply that when it is said of Jesus, that he was twelve or thirty years old, it was said in respect to his divine nature — that his *Godhead was twelve* or *thirty* years old, or that he, *as God*, was so many years old. But what man in his senses could say this? 2. In all past ages no one of those, who have had the clearest and most heart affecting views of the sufferings of Christ, has entertained the strange idea, that the divine mind of Christ was subject to pain, or that he suffered *as God*. 3. The most scriptural, the most satisfactory, and the most impressive view of the sufferings of Christ implies no such thing, as this novel scheme supposes.

But I have no occasion to enlarge. The Rev. Bennet Tyler, D. D., has replied to this singular scheme in a manner so lucid and complete, that nothing more is called for.*

But there is another opinion relative to the general subject, somewhat allied to the scheme above mentioned, which may deserve a passing notice, although but few persons could ever seriously entertain it. The opinion is, that the language of Scripture which represents God as repenting, or as being grieved and sorrowful, is to be understood literally. Those who entertain this opinion, think

* See his work entitled "The Sufferings of Christ confined to his human nature," published in Hartford, 1847.

that it results from God's benevolence, that he must have real sorrow in view of the sins and miseries of his creatures; that as he is really benevolent, his grief at the miseries which exist must be real, heartfelt grief; that to suppose him destitute of true sorrow and pain, while witnessing the dreadful sufferings among his rational offspring, would be to suppose him less benevolent than we are.

Any intelligent person, who deliberately entertains such an idea of God, must be aware that the following things are implied in it, or flow from it; namely; if there is sorrow or pain in the mind of God, arising, as is here supposed, from his benevolence, it must be in *proportion* to his benevolence, which is infinite. And then, as the prevalence of sin and misery in the creation, which is the cause of this benevolent sorrow in the mind of God, is uninterrupted, and will be endless, his sorrow must be uninterrupted and endless too. And then again, as the sight of great and unceasing sorrow in any one, particularly in one who is free from fault, always excites our sympathy and compassion; it must be so especially in this case. And accordingly when we meditate on God, and when we pray to him and praise him, we ought to have feelings of the tenderest *compassion* towards him on account of the boundless and perpetual sorrow to which he is subject, in consequence of his pure and perfect benevolence, and the prevalence of sin and misery among his creatures.

We see here, to what extravagant and impious conceptions we are exposed, when we forget that God's thoughts and ways are not ours, and form our conceptions of what is peculiar to him, from the promptings of an imagination or a heart, which heeds not the suggestions of sober reason, or the just rules of interpreting the holy Scriptures.

LECTURE XXIV.

PRE-EXISTENCE OF CHRIST.

In previous Lectures, I have adduced various arguments to prove the real and proper humanity of Jesus Christ, and considered the influence which this doctrine ought to have in the interpretation of a large class of texts, and in the solution of several difficulties.

Having proved that Christ was really and properly a man, I shall now undertake to show that *manhood was not his original character.*

The doctrine of Christ's pre-existence rests wholly on the authority of revelation. The fact that no other man ever existed, who was originally anything more than a man, or who had been in another state before he was in a state of manhood, does by no means prove that *Christ* did not originally possess a character superior to manhood — any more than the fact that no other man ever died to make atonement for sin, proves that *Jesus* did not die for that purpose.

The argument, in support of the position now before us, is of the same general character with that which I have used in proof of the manhood of Christ. We hold Christ to be a man, because the Scriptures assert those things of him which constitute a man. If with equal clearness they assert those things of him, which show that he existed before he was a man, or that he had originally a character superior to manhood; then we should act as unreasonably, and as much against the authority of revelation, in denying that Christ had that superior character, as in denying that he was a real and proper man.

While defending the proper humanity of Christ, we have had

the concurrence of the disciples of Socinus. We now come to the point of departure from them. They agree with us that Christ was a man. But we go further, and hold, that though he was in reality a man, he was not so originally; that he pre-existed in a state vastly superior to manhood. This the Socinians deny, making the simple humanity of Christ a cardinal principle in their theology. Here then I am to defend a fundamental doctrine of Revelation against the reasoning of Socinians.

At my entrance on the argument, I would make my appeal to plain common sense, candor, and piety. Let any man then, who sincerely desires to know the doctrines of Revelation, carefully read what the Scriptures contain on this subject. Let him attend to the whole account given of the Lord Jesus Christ; to the attributes and works ascribed to him; to the different states in which he is said to have existed; and to the names and titles he receives. Then let him say, whether, according to Scripture, the existence of Christ began, when he was born of Mary, — or whether he pre-existed in a state vastly superior to manhood. Socinians themselves can be in no doubt, how any man, who has full confidence in Scripture, and really aims to be conformed to its teachings, will answer this question. Let us then turn our attention to the principal texts, which relate to this point, and which will be arranged in the following order; first, those which expressly assert that Christ existed and acted before he came in the flesh; secondly, those which attribute to him perfections above what belong to man; and thirdly, those which expressly point out a change in his condition when he became incarnate.

First; the texts which assert that *he existed and acted before he came in the flesh.* John 8: 58. "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was I am." John 1: 1, 3. "In the beginning was the word." — "All things were made by him." Heb. 1: 10. It is said to Christ, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." John 17: 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 3: 13. "And no

man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven." John 6: 38. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me." V. 62. "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" Col. 1: 17. "He is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Secondly; the texts which attribute to Christ *perfections above what pertained to his human nature.* Rev. 1: 8. "I am the beginning and the ending, the Alpha and Omega, saith the Lord, who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty." Phil. 2: 6. "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The Son knows all things. He is in the midst of those who meet in his name. He has life in himself. He is above all.

Thirdly; the texts which expressly point out *a change in his condition when he became incarnate.* John 1: 1, 14. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. — And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Phil. 2: 6, 7. "Who being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation," — ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, emptied himself — "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." 2 Cor. 8: 9. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor." Various texts declare that he came down from heaven, the previous place of his abode.

These are the principal passages of Scripture, which relate to the subject before us. And who can conceive any forms of speech, which would more unequivocally and decisively teach, that manhood was not the original character of Christ? As this is the obvious sense of the passages above recited, and of many others which might be named, we must consider the question as decided, unless by a more thorough examination of the meaning and scope of these passages, and by making the Bible its own interpreter, we shall find reasons for adopting a different conclusion.

I shall therefore apply myself to a particular examination of several of the texts on which this controversy depends.

I begin with one under the first head, and one which must be considered as of special consequence in this controversy. John 8: 58. "Jesus said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, *before Abraham was, I am.*" The plain meaning is, that Christ existed before Abraham. Let us now see whether there are any sufficient reasons for departing from this obvious sense, and adopting any of the explanations which Socinians have given.

Socinus thinks the words, πρὶν Ἀβραὰμ γενέσθαι ἐγὼ εἰμι, should be rendered, "Before Abram can be Abraham, that is, the father of many nations, I must be the Messiah, or Saviour of the world." Grotius says, "Christ here only signifies that he was before Abraham in the decree of God." Wakefield translates the passage, "Before Abraham was born, I am he;" by which he says, "Christ means to imply, that his mission was settled and certain before the birth of Abraham."

Now in order to satisfy ourselves as to the soundness of any of these constructions, we must examine the occasion and scope of the passage. In conversation with the Jews, Jesus asserted, that Abraham had seen his day, and rejoiced in it. The Jews understood him to mean, that he and Abraham had actually seen each other, and had conversed together *as contemporaries.* They accordingly replied, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Jesus answered, "Verily, verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." This answer referred directly to the remark they made upon *his age*, which, as they conceived, rendered it impossible, that he should have seen Abraham.* Now what pertinence would there be in the answer, as it is understood by Socinus? They say to Christ, "thou art not yet fifty years old;" and therefore ask, "hast thou seen Abraham?" He replies, according to Socinus, — "before Abram can be Abraham, or the father of many nations, I must be the Messiah, or Saviour of the world." Now who can see any connection or suitableness, between the question, and such a reply? *Their* difficulty is, that Christ, not being fifty years old cannot have seen Abraham. He

* In the examination of this passage I am particularly indebted to Whitby and Magee.

answers, "before Abram can be Abraham, I must be the Messiah." Almost any other remark respecting Abraham, or respecting any one else, would be just as suitable an answer as this.

Examine now the interpretation of Grotius. He says, "Christ here only signifies, that he was before Abraham, *in the decree of God.*" But how could this be a reply to the objection of the Jews, which had respect to the priority of one of these two persons to the other as to *actual existence?* Further; if the meaning of Grotius is, that Christ was in the decree of God before Abraham actually existed; then how does Christ say anything of himself, which is not equally true of any other person? And why should Christ assert what is so nugatory? Moreover, if Christ meant in this passage to speak of *himself* with reference to the divine decree, we should naturally suppose he meant to speak of *Abraham* also with reference to the same. But what could possibly be meant by Christ's existing in the divine decree before Abraham existed in the divine decree?

Wakefield's construction is this: "Before Abraham was born, I am he, that is, the Messiah, meaning to imply, that his mission was settled and certain before the birth of Abraham." But here the same inquiry returns; what connection subsists between such an answer and the question of the Jews? We admit that his mission was settled and certain before the birth of Abraham. But how could this have tended to show the possibility of Christ's having seen Abraham? Besides, this translation is built, as Magee suggests, on the assumption of an ellipsis altogether arbitrary, and without any precedent.

As to Priestley's notion, "that Christ may be said to have been before Abraham, because the Messiah had been held forth as the great object of hope and joy for the human race, not only to Abraham, but even to his ancestors," I shall only remark, that the terms used by Christ are no more suited to convey this truth, than a variety of other truths entirely different. — As to all these Socinian interpretations, it is perfectly apparent, that no writers would ever have conceived anything, so distant from the plain meaning of the text, and so extremely unnatural and forced, had

they not set their inventions to work on purpose to frame an interpretation which would not oppose their favorite scheme.

How easy is it in the case now in hand, to apply the grand principle of making the Bible its own interpreter. Here is a text, whose *literal* meaning Dr. Priestley himself acknowledges to be, that Christ existed before Abraham was born. Is the literal meaning to be adopted? To settle this point, we resort to other passages which relate to the same subject. These passages assert, that Christ was before all things — that he was in the beginning with God — that he laid the foundations of the earth — that he is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. Here we have clear light. For if these texts, or any part of them, are to be taken in their natural and obvious sense, as they must be unless there are imperious reasons against it, they afford full confirmation of the literal sense of the text under consideration. Why then should we hesitate to admit, that Christ's pre-existence is here asserted, when this is the sense we are led to adopt, both by the words of the text, and by the manifest scope of the whole passage; and when Christ's pre-existence is expressly asserted in so many other places?

John 1: 1. "In the beginning was the word." The identity of the Logos or word with Christ is so plain, that I shall spend no time to prove it. The question now to be considered is, whether "the beginning," denotes the commencement of the gospel dispensation, or a period antecedent to the birth of Jesus. This must be determined from the circumstances and scope of the passage. We inquire then, what names or titles, what attributes or acts are here ascribed to Christ? One of the adjuncts in the same verse is, "the *word was God.*" How can this be applied to Christ on the supposition of his possessing mere humanity? Jesus, who never existed before he was born of Mary, was *God!* — and was *that* God, by whom all things were made. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." The language is remarkably strong; and the sense so clear, that it seems impossible to mistake it. We here learn very satisfactorily, what is meant by "*the beginning,*" in verse 1. And this is taught

more directly by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians, who, after declaring that all things whether in heaven or in earth were created by Christ, says, "and he is *before* all things, and by him all things consist." The phrase, "in the beginning," must therefore denote a period antecedent to the first act of creative power.

Heb. 1: 10, 11, 12. "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail." The Socinians say that part of the testimony belongs to Christ, but not the whole of it.* "These words," they urge, "being first expressly spoken of God, and here referred to Christ,—we must consider what in them is agreeable to the nature and condition of Christ, who certainly was a man." But this, like most of their arguments, takes it for granted, "that Christ was a mere man, and not God by nature." It is true that these words were first expressly spoken of God; but it is no less true, the Apostle being judge, that the *Lord Jesus is that God.* As to the pretence that part of these words belong to the Father, and part to Christ, I shall only remark, what is perfectly evident, that there is, in every respect, the same reason to think the Apostle meant to apply them all to Christ, as any part of them.

This passage affords evidence which is perfectly decisive, in favor of the literal sense of John 1: 3. "All things were made by him." The supposition of Socinians that the work of Christ here intended, is the new creation, or the kingdom of grace, is instantly set aside by the passage in Hebrews, where it is said that, *in the beginning*, the Son of God laid the foundation of the earth, and that the heavens are the works of his hands; and where we are further taught, that the very things, which he made, shall be changed and perish; which certainly is not true of the gospel kingdom, which is the new, spiritual creation. Now if, in the plain, literal sense of the words, Christ in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth,

* See Owen on the place.

and if the heavens are the works of his hands; then clearly he must have existed before he came into the world, in a state vastly superior to simple humanity.

John 17: 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." This text shows that Christ existed in a glorious state with the Father, before the world was. Other texts which teach that Christ was in the beginning with God — that he came down from heaven — and that the place to which he ascended was the place where he was before, establish the obvious sense of this passage.

Phil. 2: 6 — 9. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, etc."

To prevent strife and vain-glory, and to promote lowliness of mind and mutual kindness, the Apostle sets before the Philippians the example of Christ, and in lively colors represents his great condescension and humility. He shows them how much below himself he descended for their sakes; how truly great he was by nature; how astonishingly he humbled himself by choice. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God — humbled himself." Further to encourage their obedience and humility, he sets before them the glorious rewards which Jesus received, and which would also be theirs, if they copied his example.

Bishop Sherlock, to whom I am specially indebted for my remarks on this passage, very properly notices the three different states of Christ, which the Apostle here points out; first; the original state of dignity and glory from which he willingly descended; — "who being in the form of God, etc." Secondly; the state of humiliation to which he descended, "He emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant." Thirdly; the state of exaltation and

glory, to which he was raised, as the reward of his humiliation. "Wherefore God highly exalted him." The first of these states is absolutely necessary to the Apostle's argument. Take it away, and the example of humiliation he would propose disappears, and the whole argument is not only weakened, but destroyed. If Christ were not originally in a state of dignity, then the second state here mentioned, that is, his being in the form of a servant, would not be a state of humiliation. If he were not at first better than a servant, his being a servant was his natural condition, not his choice. It was owing to the order of divine providence, not to his voluntary condescension. And so in reality he was no more humble in being a servant, than those who are born into that state.

It is plainly implied in the Apostle's argument, that Christ was in possession of whatever belonged to his state of dignity, *before* he was in his state of humiliation. It was from that dignified, exalted state, that he mercifully descended to a low condition. So that whatever is meant by his being in the form of God; it is evident he was in that form, *before* he was made in the likeness of men. His being made in the likeness of men is given as the grand instance of his condescension; but his being in the form of God is mentioned, as that which previously constituted his proper excellence and dignity.

It is further obvious, that his humiliation and sufferings preceded his state of exaltation. The Apostle teaches, that the exaltation of Christ was the consequence and reward of his humiliation. Hence it clearly follows, that his natural, original state of dignity, and his acquired state of exaltation, were states totally distinct and different; the one, before his humiliation, the other, after it. Accordingly, his being in the form of God does not belong to him in virtue of anything he did or suffered in his humiliation; and so is not any part of the glory, to which he was exalted on account of his sufferings. This important distinction should be kept in view, as a safeguard against a mistake frequently made by Socinians. Because Christ was highly exalted as a reward of his humiliation; because for his sufferings and death he was crowned with glory and honor; they have supposed that *all* the dignity and glory,

which are ever ascribed to him in the Scriptures, belong to him only in consequence of his obedience and death. And when you cite those texts, which give the highest description of his attributes and glories to prove his divinity, they think it a sufficient answer to say, that Christ received his glory after his resurrection; and therefore that the exalted honors which are frequently ascribed to him, are acquired honors, and not naturally his; that they belong to him as a reward of what he did in the work of Redemption. But this view entirely confounds the two distinct states of glory which the Scriptures attribute to Christ; the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, and the glory which he received from the Father as the reward of his humiliation; one, the glory of nature; the other, the glory of office; — one, the glory of the eternal Logos; the other, the glory of the Son of man, the Saviour of sinners.

Christ's receiving in time the glory belonging to one of these states, is no proof that he did not eternally possess the glory belonging to the other. He that, by commission, receives power to govern a province, or a kingdom, cannot be said to have had no power before. The powers of nature must be antecedent to the powers of office. When the Scriptures speak of Christ with respect to his natural, inherent power and glory, they ascribe to him the creation and preservation of all things. When they speak of him with respect to the power and glory of his office, they represent him as the Head of the church — as the first born from the dead — as having purged our sins, and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high — as being made better than the angels, having by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

This point is so material, that, without keeping our eye upon it, we shall be liable to misunderstand much of what the Scriptures teach concerning Christ. For while, on the one hand, it is very absurd to urge those texts which describe the glories that Christ received in his official character, as a proof of the divine dignity and glory of his nature; so on the other hand, it is absurd to apply to the original, divine glories of his nature, those limitations which belong to the glories of his office.

Dr. Wardlaw exhibits the argument from that part of the passage which I have passed in silence, in the following manner: "Who being in the form of God, say our Unitarian opponents, thought it not a prey to be as God; — that is, being in the form of God by the communication of divine wisdom and power, did not eagerly grasp at the resemblance of God; — which seems to amount to no more than this; — that possessing a resemblance to God, he did not eagerly grasp at that which he already possessed. But apart from all criticism, I would seriously ask those who thus interpret it, if they think it possible that this can be its true meaning? Is it then to be the peculiar object of our admiration and astonishment — is it to be held up as the example which, of all examples, we are most sedulously to imitate — that a creature, a man, possessing by divine communication a singular portion of miraculous power and wisdom, did not pervert these high endowments to his own selfish ends? — that he was not guilty of the most heaven-daring presumption and impiety? — that he absolutely did not so abuse the gifts bestowed upon him, as to enter into a kind of competition for glory with that Supreme Being, from whom he derived his wisdom and power? Is this, I ask, can this be, the singular virtue which we are called to admire and to imitate as the highest model of excellence ever exhibited on earth? And what is more immediately to our present purpose — where, according to this interpretation, is the amazing condescension and benevolence of the Saviour? Is this the height, and depth, and length and breadth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge? The unnatural and vapid tameness of such an exposition is, of itself, sufficient to condemn it. It unnerves and paralyzes the whole strength of the passage."

We are now, secondly, to examine those texts which attribute perfections to Christ above what pertained to his human nature.

Rev. 1: 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty." If it can be made to appear that Christ is the speaker in this passage, the argument is conclusive; for it would be both

absurd and blasphemous for any created being to claim these perfections. Now that Christ is the speaker is manifest from the general scope of the context, and particularly from vs. 17, 18: "I am the first and the last, he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive forever more." There is indeed no conceivable reason, why the passage above quoted should not be understood of Christ, except the prepossession of some men against giving him divine honors.

In the Scriptures, Christ is said to know all things; to have life in himself, and to give it to whomsoever he will; and to be present with all those who are gathered together in his name. These remarkable characters of Christ no more belong to mere humanity, than absolute eternity.

If then Christ had so many attributes above what belonged to him in his human nature, it follows that he must have preëxisted in a superior character.

But the third class of texts before mentioned, afford, if possible, still more decisive evidence of the pre-existence of Christ. Our opponents may say, though in the face of sound argument and criticism, that the passages which speak directly of the pre-existence of Christ, are to be understood of the purpose or appointment of God, or of the representations which were made from the beginning of the world of the Messiah to come, as the object of hope and joy to mankind, and that the passages which attribute to him perfections, above what have been known in any other case to belong to human nature, are to be understood of the extraordinary endowments with which he was furnished, to qualify him for the important place he was to fill in the kingdom of God. But what can they say of those passages, which expressly teach, that a great *change* actually took place in his character and state, when he became man? There seems to be no way in which Unitarians can evade the argument from these texts in favor of the pre-existence of Christ, but by alleging, that they relate to something which took place during his abode on earth. Accordingly the question to be agitated is, whether the texts quoted under this head, point out a change which took place *when Christ became man*, or a change which took place *afterwards*.

We begin with John 1: 14. "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The meaning which the inspired writer intended to convey is as obvious and certain, as any words could make it. The word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and by whom all things were created, — was made flesh, or became incarnate, and dwelt among us. If any change of state is here signified, it plainly consisted in his becoming man, or being made flesh. If no change of state is meant to be signified; then he who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and by whom all things were created, was no other than a mere man, who was born of Mary at Bethlehem, thousands of years after the creation, of which he was the author! It is sufficient barely to state the sentiment of Socinians, and to ask, how the Evangelist could undertake to teach such a sentiment by such language consistently either with common sense, or honesty.

But this text must be taken in connection with others; first, with the one already examined, Phil. ii. The change now under consideration is here expressed thus. "He made himself of no reputation,"— *ἐκένωσε ἑαυτὸν*, he emptied or divested himself — "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." Previously "he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God." In John, the change is represented as consisting in his being made flesh; here, in his taking upon him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Now examine the life of Jesus on earth, and see if any event took place from his birth to his ascension, which in any degree answers to the representation here made of the change. At what period subsequent to his birth did he put off the form of God, and assume the form of a servant?* In what part of his life did he begin to exhibit less of the form of God, than he had exhibited in the preceding part? In what part of his life was he made flesh, in a sense in which he was not flesh before? But if the change spoken of did not take place in any part of his life as man, there is no way to avoid the conclusion,

* Wardlaw's Discourses.

that it took place when he became man. And if a change from a higher to a lower state took place when he became man, the doctrine of his pre-existence is established.

Take one text more. 2 Cor. 8: 9. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be rich." "On repeating these words we naturally ask," with Wardlaw,* "when was Jesus rich as a man? — when he was born in the stable and laid in the manger? — when he said, the foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head? — At what period of his life was he rich? — and when and how did he become poor?" Compare this text with the one considered above, John 1: 14. Taking them together we conclude that Christ's becoming poor in one of the texts, answers to his being made flesh in the other; and so that his being rich in the one, refers to his original greatness and glory as Creator and Proprietor of the universe, ascribed to him in the other. And if we proceed with this comparative view of different texts relating to the same subject, and consider the passage in Phil. ii, our interpretation of the texts above mentioned will appear still more satisfactory. Admitting that Christ pre-existed in an exalted and glorious state, all these passages convey a very plain and important truth. But on the Socinian hypothesis, their meaning becomes embarrassed and unintelligible.

If you would learn the peculiar nature of the change spoken of in the forecited passages; then take a general view of the representations which are made of this change in the texts referred to, as that he was in the beginning with God, and was God; that by him all things were created; that he was made flesh; that he descended from a state of riches to a state of poverty; and so of the rest. To obtain a clear idea of the change suggested by these representations, examine particularly all the texts, which are descriptive of the two different states that belonged to him; — his state of original dignity and glory, and his state of voluntary

* See his Discourses on the Socinian Controversy.

humiliation. Take, for example, the text in Philippians, "Who being in the form of God, etc." We wish to discover what this text means. What was it for Christ to be in the *form of God?* You learn this, so far as you are concerned to know it, from those texts which give the fullest description of the original character of Christ. He is the Alpha and Omega; by him were all things made; he is, before all things; the true God and eternal life; over all God blessed forever; the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person. These texts, relating as they do, to the original character of Christ, show what is meant by the *form of God*, in contradistinction to the *form of a servant;* and also what is meant by Christ's being rich, in contradistinction to the state of poverty, to which he submitted for the sake of our redemption. Again; if you would learn exactly what is that poverty to which he submitted; attend to the various texts which give an account of his birth; of the circumstances of his life, as a man; his trials, labors, wants, sufferings and death. Here you learn what was his state of poverty. These representations show what it was for the word to be made flesh; for God to dwell with us; and for him who was in the form of God to take upon him the form of a servant. In this way you may satisfy yourselves, that the change of Christ's state is well expressed by the Assembly of Divines, and consisted "in his taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God and the cursed death of the cross, in his being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time."

There is one important inference from the foregoing reasoning, with which I shall close. If Christ's being in a state of humiliation and suffering is clearly the consequence of a great and voluntary change which took place in his state; then none of the terms which are used to describe the state of his humiliation, and none of the circumstances attending it, can be urged against the divine glory of his own proper, original character. Here you have a ready answer to the strongest argument ever used against the doctrine under consideration. From the circumstance of Christ's being a

man, dependent, limited in knowledge, mortal, etc., Socinians argue against his pre-existence in a superior state. In this argument, they entirely overlook the important consideration, that the manhood of Christ, his dependence, limited knowledge, etc., are all the result and the mere result of the change of state, to which he graciously submitted for the salvation of men.

I give the following illustration of this, though I am sensible the illustration is very imperfect. Suppose then a king, the lawful possessor of the crown, benevolently condescends, for a time, to occupy a low place — to fill some menial office in society, which no one else is willing or able to occupy. He does this for the sake of relieving a class of citizens from wretchedness, and raising them to a state of comfort. In the exercise of his distinguished kindness, he puts on the habit of a man in that humble office, and enters on its duties. Certain foreigners, seeing him in this condition, and knowing nothing of his own proper character, or of the reasons of his present appearance and employment, pass by him without notice. Some of his ministers of state, observing the mistake of these strangers, tell them, that the man they passed by, is *the king*. A controversy ensues. The foreigners argue, that he cannot be the king, because he appears in so low a condition, and exhibits none of the ensigns of royalty. His ministers reply, that out of paternal affection to a certain class of unhappy citizens, and for the sake of their relief, he has, for a time, laid aside the ensigns of royalty, and assumed this humble office; that, with their own eyes, they witnessed the change in his condition; and, that, under all this mean appearance, they perfectly recognize the dignified person of *the king;* that they are his ministers of state, and shall, a few days hence, see him arrayed in all the honors of majesty. The strangers, notwithstanding the united testimony of the ministers and citizens, are still bold to assert that he is not and cannot be *the king*, and cannot deserve the reverence due to a king, because he does not now show the ensigns of the kingly office, but, on the contrary, appears in a mean habit, and acts the part of a servant. — The controversy between these ministers and these foreigners I leave to your decision.

LECTURE XXV.

THE DIVINITY OR GODHEAD OF CHRIST PROVED FROM THE APPLICATION TO HIM OF THE DIVINE NAMES, GOD, AND JEHOVAH.

It has, if I mistake not, been satisfactorily proved, that humanity was not the original character of Christ; but that he preexisted in a nature superior to that of man. In regard to this point the Arians agree with us. It now becomes a most interesting inquiry, what that superior nature of Christ was. And here we shall find it necessary to take our departure, not only from Socinians, but from Arians — from every class of Unitarians. It must be kept in mind, that the subject before us lies wholly beyond the province of mere human reason, and is eminently a subject of pure revelation. In regard to this subject therefore, as in regard to every subject pertaining to the Christian religion, the proper and only inquiry is, what do the Scriptures reveal? Do they teach that Jesus Christ, considered in his original nature, or in the highest point of his character, is divine, or that he is human? or do they teach that he occupies some place between divinity and humanity? Doubtless there are marks or characters, by which the eternal God is distinguished from all created beings. Do these peculiar marks belong to Christ?

The distinguishing marks or characters, by which the Supreme Being is made known to us, are his peculiar names and titles, his attributes, works and honors. If on careful inquiry it shall be found, that all these belong to Christ, and that they belong to him in the same sense in which they are elsewhere represented as belonging to God; what must be our conclusion, but that Christ is God? Especially as there is a strong presumption, as I have

before suggested, that revelation will sacredly guard the honors of the Supreme Being, and never expose us to the danger of thinking, that any creature, however exalted, may share them with him. That it does in fact thus guard the honors of the Godhead is very apparent.

In the first place, then, we find that *the names and titles which are peculiar to the Supreme Being, are applied to Christ.* The following are among the principal passages where the name *God* is given to Christ. John 1: 1. "The word was God." Luke 1: 16, 17. It is said of John Baptist that he shall "turn many to the Lord their God," meaning Christ, as appears from the connection. John 20: 28. "And Thomas answered and said unto him, my Lord and my God." Rom. 9: 5. "Of whom — Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." 1 Tim. 3: 16. "God manifest in the flesh." Tit. 2: 13. "The glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." See also 2 Pet. 1: 1. — Heb. 1: 8. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." 1 John 5: 20. "This is the true God and eternal life."

Let us now apply ourselves to a careful, though it must be a brief examination of several of these texts, and see whether upon the principles of sound interpretation, they do indeed afford conclusive evidence of the deity of Christ, or whether they are to be understood in some other way.

We begin with John 1: 1. "The word was God." The only question is, whether the term *God* is here used in a literal and proper sense, for the Supreme Being, or in a metaphorical sense, for a being who is not truly divine.

It is admitted on all hands, that we are to understand words in their literal and proper sense, unless there are manifest reasons against it. In the case before us then, are there any reasons why the word *God* should not be understood in its proper and highest sense? Unitarians cannot be allowed to say, that the word is not to be understood literally, because it is applied to Christ; for this would be a manifest begging of the question. It would be taking for granted, that whereas there is only one God, Christ cannot be God; which is the point at issue. If

this way of setting aside the proper sense of the word, should be admitted, it is very clear that the Scriptures never could, by any possible forms of expression, teach the Deity of Christ. For whatever language might be employed, Unitarians could easily assert, that the meaning cannot be what it appears to be, *because* Christ cannot be God without destroying the divine unity. According to this mode of treating the subject, our inquiry would no longer be, what do the Scriptures teach, but whether we shall receive the doctrines of revelation or not?

Is there then any reason against understanding the language of Scripture, here applied to Christ, in its literal, proper sense? Is there anything in the text, or in the circumstances attending it, which could have been intended to guard us against this sense? We find it here said, that all things were made by Christ; that he is the light and life of the world, etc. Are not these circumstances evidence, that the word *God* is applied to Christ in its literal sense? Are they not clear indications, that true Divinity is intended? From the passage itself then, taken in a connected view, there is not only no reason against the proper sense of the word *God*, but strong reasons in favor of it.

For further satisfaction, compare this case with those cases, in which the word *God* is applied to a mere man. In each of these, you will find the plainest intimations that the word *God* is used in a secondary and subordinate sense. Exod. 7: 1. "And the Lord said unto Moses, see I have made thee a God unto Pharaoh;" — "I have *made* thee a god." It evidently denotes the commission which God gave him, and the authority with which God invested him. He was to be a god, or *as* a god unto Pharaoh, because of the great power he was to exercise in regard to the plagues which should come upon Egypt.

Ps. 82: 6. "I have said ye are gods, and all of you children of the Most High." Here magistrates are called gods. But we are directly informed of their weakness and mortality. "Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." It is thus made clear, that the word is meant to be understood in a metaphorical sense. Though, on account of their commission and au-

thority, they are called gods, it is immediately suggested, that they are nothing but dying men. Whitby's remarks on this passage are coincident with those just made. He says, "When magistrates are in Scripture called gods, the Holy Ghost still addeth something which excludes them from true divinity — as that they shall die like men, or that they are rulers of the people; whereas when Christ is called God, it is either with some epithet belonging to the Supreme Being or with the addition of some operation proper to God."

Exod. 22: 28. "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people." The word *gods* here has generally been applied to magistrates. But as the original is generally used for the Supreme Being, and is not to be applied to any other without very obvious reasons, and as there are no such reasons here, inasmuch as the prohibition is a very proper and important one, if the true God is intended; I think it most natural to adopt this sense: "Thou shalt not revile (or blaspheme) God, nor speak evil of the ruler of thy people." Understood thus, it is substantially the same precept, as is expressed positively in the New Testament: "Fear God, honor the king."

When the name of God is given to idols, it is plainly given in conformity with their groundless claims, or rather with the pretensions of their worshippers.

Thus it appears, that when the name of God is given to men, or to idols, the attendant circumstances clearly show, that the word is used in a metaphorical sense. But in the passage above examined where it is said that Christ the Logos was God, there is not the least intimation, that the term is to be understood in any other than its proper sense. On the contrary, the circumstances clearly intimate that it must denote proper divinity.

In a just interpretation of Scripture, this comparative view of different passages is of the first importance. And I shall here avail myself of the help it affords, in giving the right sense to the passage 1 John 5: 20. "This is the true God and eternal life." It is said by Unitarians, that the declaration may refer not to the Son of God, but to the Father; although that is the remotest

antecedent, and the general rule requires that the relative should refer to the nearest antecedent. Now why should it be thought necessary in this case, to form an exception to a general rule, and to make the relative refer to the remotest antecedent, rather than the nearest, which is Christ? Why this extraordinary effort to prevent the application of the name of God to the Saviour in this particular place, when there are so many other places in which there is no doubt of such an application? If John can say in his Gospel, "the Word was God," why should it be thought strange that he should say the same in his Epistle? If Thomas, a fellow disciple of John, could address Christ as "his Lord and his God," —if he could do this unreproved, and even be commended for it by Christ, as a proper expression of his faith; surely an attempt to show that, in the text just cited, the word God cannot relate to its nearest antecedent, because, as the argument assumes, it cannot be applied to Christ, is an attempt proper for no one who is willing that the Bible should explain itself.

But "the circumstance which places the matter beyond dispute is, that the same person is plainly and unequivocally spoken of as the true God, and the eternal life. It is granted that a writer is the best interpreter of his own phraseology. Observe then the expressions he uses in the beginning of the epistle: 'The life was manifested, and we have seen it, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' In these words, it is admitted by Socinians themselves, that the eternal life is a title given to Christ. Compare then the two passages. Is not the conclusion of the Epistle a clear explanation of its beginning? At the beginning 'we show unto you the eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.' At the close,—'We are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and the eternal life.' Now if this designation, the eternal life, at the end of the sentence, is clearly meant of Jesus Christ, the immediate antecedent; so beyond all reasonable doubt must the preceding clause be. The same person is undeniably affirmed to be the true God and the eternal life." *

* Wardlaw.

To these words there is immediately subjoined an admonition against idolatry. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." The connection in which this admonition is introduced, is an additional proof that our interpretation is correct. For, as an eminent writer* justly observes: "it is very unlikely that the Apostle John should conclude his Epistle with a solemn charge against idolatry, or the worshipping of that which is not God, and yet in the foregoing verse, leave his expression concerning the true God, so easily and so naturally to be interpreted concerning Christ, if he were not the true God."

As to the address of Thomas — if any one should consider it as a vehement exclamation, a sudden burst of surprise and rapturous affection, and should on this principle undertake to account for it, that he calls Christ his God; I would then turn to the first sentence of this Gospel, and inquire whether a historian, such as John, in the coolness of age, and at the very commencement of his narrative, can be supposed to have felt any such surprise or rapture, or to have broken out into such a vehement exclamation. But if John, as a faithful historian and teacher, could deliberately, and coolly assert, that "the Word was God;" why could not Thomas assert the same, as an act of rational faith and adoration.

Rom. 9: 5. "Of whom, as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all God blessed forever." Many constructions have been invented by learned criticism, tending to pervert or obscure this plain testimony to the Divinity of Christ. The one which deserves most notice, and is most relied upon by Unitarians, is that which makes the whole or part of the clause to be merely a doxology in praise of the Father, thus: "God who is over all be blessed forever;" or, "God be blessed forever." An unanswerable objection to the former of these constructions is contained in the remark of Middleton; — "that in all the doxologies both of the Septuagint and of the New Testament, in which εὐλογητός is used, it is placed at the beginning of a sentence." "Against the other supposed doxology," he says, "the objection is still stronger,

* Watts.

since that would require us not only to transpose εὐλογητός, but to read ὁ θεός." The common construction of this important text is strongly supported by the principles of sound criticism. It is the belief of Michaelis, "that Paul here delivers the same doctrine of the Divinity of Christ which is elsewhere unquestionably maintained in the New Testament."

"Besides these considerations as to the construction of the words in the original, there is something in the antithetical form of the sentence which confirms the common translation. 'Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came.' Is not this evidently intended to distinguish what he was according to the flesh, or as to his human nature, as here contrasted with that higher view of his character, according to which he is *God over all?* Remove from the words, 'as concerning the flesh,' this idea of antithesis, and you deprive them of all force and meaning whatever; and you convert them into a useless and unnatural pleonasm, which adds weakness, instead of strength and propriety to the expression and the sentiment."

"There is," says another learned writer, "a magnificent rise in the climax, when we come to read that this Christ, who came of the Father according to the flesh, was in reality God."

Admitting what is perfectly evident, that the word *God* is here applied to Christ, we must conclude, from the adjuncts, that it is meant to be applied in its proper sense. For he who is called God, is declared to be "over all," and "blessed forever."

Heb. 1: 8. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." These words are quoted from Psalm 45; and we have the Apostle's authority for applying them to Christ. "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." All that remains is to ascertain whether the name God is here used in a proper, or in a metaphorical sense. Is there then any intimation, or any circumstance, to guard us against supposing that supreme Divinity is intended? Exactly the contrary. The context clearly proves, that he who is here called God, is Jehovah. For in the following verses, the Apostle ascribes to him the work of creation, and everlasting dominion, and celebrates his absolute immutability.

John 10: 33; compared with ch. 5: 18 — 19: 7. "Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Some Unitarians would render it, makest thyself *a god*. This rendering might have meant something in the mouth of one who believed in polytheism. But what could it mean in the mouth of a Jew, who acknowledged only one God? Middleton and others have shown, that according to the principles of the Greek language, it is not to be inferred that θεός is here used in an inferior sense, because the article is omitted.

"Because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." This was addressed to Christ by the Jews, and shows what construction they put upon his words. They had just heard him say, that he and his Father *are one;* and previously that he was *the Son* of God, and that God was *his Father*. In consequence of these high claims, they charge him with making himself God. Had not the construction which they put upon his words been right, there is good reason to think he would have corrected it. His reply to them, John 10: 34 — 36, which some suppose was intended to correct that construction, was evidently argumentum ad hominem, — a confutation of his opposers on principles maintained by themselves. "If he, or it," meaning the Scripture, "called them gods, to whom this word of God came," — that is, if those who were addressed in this passage, cited from Psalm 82, "were called gods; say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou *blasphemest*, because I said I am the Son of God?" This passage affords not the least reason to think, that Jesus meant to represent himself as a god in the same sense in which the Jewish magistrates were called gods. The argument is from the less to the greater. If such persons as those addressed in the passage quoted, were called gods, why should one, so much superior to them, be charged with *blasphemy*, because he declared himself to be *the Son of God*, or *the Messiah;* which, according to their Scriptures, was making himself God. See ch. 19: 7. "They answered Pilate, we have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." It was Christ's making himself the *Son of God*, that they considered as

blasphemy. But why? Evidently because making himself the *Son* of God was, as they were led by their Scriptures to understand that title, the same as making himself *God*. And for a mere man, as they regarded Jesus to be, to make himself God, was blasphemy; that is, it was claiming divine honors; and this was treating God with irreverence and impiety.

We must remember it was the charge of *blasphemy* that Jesus meant to repel, not the charge of calling himself the Son of God, and thus making himself God. He certainly did not mean to repel the charge of calling himself *the Son of God*. Nor did he mean to deny that calling himself the Son of God was making himself *God*. But he meant to deny, that he was guilty of *blasphemy* for calling himself the Son of God in such a way as implied that he was God. The Old Testament Scriptures ascribed to the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the attributes and honors of the Godhead; and hence for Jesus to call himself the Son of God was, constructively, to claim divine attributes and honors; that is, in other words, to make himself God. You observe that the design of the argument was to justify himself in what he had done; that is, to show that they had no reason to charge him with blasphemy, because he had done that which they understood to be making himself God.

There is another consideration, which shows that while Jesus repelled the charge of blasphemy, he still meant to maintain the high claims which they had understood him to assert. The consideration is, that after he had made use of the argument above recited, and finished his reply, they continued to feel the same dissatisfaction as before. "Therefore they sought again to take him;" doubtless because, after all he had said, they still conceived that he made himself God, by calling himself the Son of God. The remarks of Storr and Flatt on this passage coincide with the views above expressed.*

It is needless to pursue further this examination of particular texts. If I have made it apparent, that the name God is in various

* Bib. Theol. Vol. I. p. 240, 428.

passages of Scripture applied to Christ, and applied in its proper and primary sense, I have done what I intended. It was my object to illustrate the nature of the argument, not to dwell upon all the particular texts in which the argument is contained.

Before leaving this point, I ought to advert to those cases, in which it might not be supposed evident from the passages themselves, though capable of being inferred from other considerations, that the name *God* is intended to be applied to Christ. I refer to such texts as Tit. 2: 13. "The glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1: 1. "Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Luke 1: 16. "He," that is John, "shall turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God." Now it may not be at once evident from the texts themselves, whether the name God is to be applied to the Father, or to the Son. Though it would seem, that according to the most natural and easy construction, it belongs to Christ, yet such a construction may perhaps without violence be given, that it shall belong to the Father. On this account, I should not place such texts foremost in the rank of those which prove the Deity of Christ, in opposition to Socinians and Arians. It is proper to attend first and most particularly to those passages, which afford unequivocal evidence, that the name of God in its proper sense belongs to Christ. This being done, we shall see that there is no presumption against considering the name of God as applied to Christ in such other texts, as those above mentioned. For if in so many places, it is certainly applied to him, what presumption can there be against the same application here? Why should we labor to find out another construction, which may possibly consist with the language employed, when that which gives the name of God to Christ is the most natural and obvious, and when that construction is supported by a multitude of texts which are plain and unambiguous. When therefore it is said of John Baptist, that he should turn many to the Lord their God, we may well think by the Lord their God, *Christ* is meant. Because, as Dr. Clarke himself allows, though reluctantly, "that in strictness of construction, the words are connected with the following word *him*, which must necessarily be un-

derstood by Christ." Now if "in strictness of construction" the words belong to *Christ*, there is certainly no reason why we should invent another construction. The same remarks apply to the passages above quoted, Tit. 2: 13. Pet. 1: 1. Dr. Clarke acknowledges that in each of these places the words will grammatically bear a construction, which makes the whole passage belong to Christ. According to this, the reading will be, "the glorious appearing of *our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ;*"—the righteousness of *our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" As the words will bear this construction, all the texts above investigated are so many probable reasons in support of it.

But respecting these texts something more is to be said. Wardlaw observes, "that they have been brought forward into more prominent notice of late; that their application depends on the usage of the Greek language with respect to the definite article, a usage not only ascertained beyond all controversy, by the learning of recent critics, but recognized and proceeded upon, without any reference to the support of a theological system, in almost all the older English translations of the Bible."

The phrase 2 Pet. 1: 1, is thus rendered in the common version, "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In the margin of the larger English Bibles, and in all the old versions; "the righteousness *of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" According to the established principles of Greek construction, this is their only just translation. So the passage in Titus should be rendered, "the glorious appearing of *our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*" Besides the established rule of construction, there is in the present instance an additional consideration in support of this rendering which is of no trifling weight; "namely, the circumstance, that while we are directed very often to the second *appearing of Jesus Christ*, as the object of Christian hope, there is no instance in which we read of *the appearing of the Father.*"

We proceed now to the name *Jehovah.* The Greek word which is rendered *Lord* in the New Testament, is the word by which the Septuagint version expresses the name *Jehovah.* In the passages therefore which are quoted from the Old Testament into the New,

we must generally understand the word *Lord* as equivalent to *Jehovah.*

Jehovah has been considered as the incommunicable name of the Supreme Being. He appropriates it to himself, — "*My* name JEHOVAH." At the close of Psalm 83, we have these words: "that men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth." Now what greater proof can be required of the supreme Divinity of Christ, than to find that this name is repeatedly and directly given to him both in the Old and the New Testament?

The words, Isaiah 40: 3, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of Jehovah," were fulfilled when John appeared as the forerunner of *Christ* to prepare the people to receive him. A comparison of Isaiah 6: 3, with John 1: 23. John 3: 28, and Mal. 3: 1, will show that the Jehovah, before whom the messenger was sent, was the Messiah.

Heb. 1: 10. These words, "Thou Lord in the beginning," are applied to the Son of God; and they are quoted from Ps. 102, where the writer in different parts of the Psalm addresses him who is called Jehovah.

Again if you compare Isaiah 6: 1—10, with John 12: 41, you will find it very manifest, that Jesus Christ is the Jehovah whose glory the prophet saw.

I forbear to quote those places in the Old Testamant where the name Jehovah is applied to the Angel of the covenant; to him who is called the Saviour of Israel; to him who was to be born of a virgin; and other places in which there is good reason to think that the name Jehovah is given to the Messiah. My object has been, not a complete enumeration of appropriate texts, but a selection of those which afford the clearest evidence. If we have satisfactorily proved the fact, that the Scriptures apply the name Jehovah to Christ, we have established a principle of interpretation, which will justify us in applying the same name to Christ, in a variety of other passages, which might possibly admit of another interpretation, but which are most naturally and easily interpreted in this way.

LECTURE XXVI.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM THE ASCRIPTION TO HIM OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES AND WORKS.

I MIGHT dwell much longer on the argument derived from the application of the names and titles of the Supreme Being to Jesus Christ. But I have considered it unnecessary; because the reasoning on other texts would be substantially the same with that, to which you have attended. It must not however be forgotten, that a distinct argument arises from every single instance, in which the inspired writers apply to Christ any of the names or titles of the Supreme Being.

I shall now, in the second place, show that *the divine attributes belong to Christ.*

1. Eternity. Isa. 9: 6. "His name shall be called the everlasting Father." John 1: 1. "In the beginning was the word." John 8: 58. "Before Abraham was I am." Rev. 1: 8. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, who was, and is, and is to come."

2. Omnipotence. Isa. 9: 6. "His name shall be called — the mighty God." Phil. 3: 21. "He is able to subdue all things to himself." Heb. 1: 3. "Upholding all things by the word of his power." Rev. 1: 8. "The Almighty."

3. Omniscience. John 2: 24, 25. "Jesus knew all men, he knew what was in man." — 21: 17. "Lord thou knowest all things." Rev. 2: 23. "I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts." Jude 25. "To the only wise God our Saviour be glory forever."

4. Omnipresence. Matt. 28: 20. "Lo I am with you alway even

unto the end of the world." —18: 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." His omnipresence is implied in his upholding all things by the word of his power.

The argument for the Deity of Christ which these texts afford, would need no particular discussion or illustration, were it not for the objections of those who deny the doctrine.

The passage in Rev. 1: 8, is one of the principal ones commonly adduced to prove the eternal existence of Christ. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, who was, and is, and is to come." That these words were spoken by Jesus Christ of himself seems to be rendered certain by other passages in the Apocalypse. Take v. 17, 18 of the same chapter. "I am the first and the last, he that liveth *and was dead;* and behold I am alive forever more." See also ch. 22: 13. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." These are represented as the words of him who says just before, "Behold I come quickly;" and just after, "I am the root and offspring of David." Now compare these passages with the language of God in Isa. 44: 6. "Thus saith Jehovah, the king of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts; I am the first; and I am the last; and besides me there is no God." These titles which denote eternal existence, and which are appropriated by Jehovah to himself, are repeatedly assumed by Christ.

One of the texts which I have quoted to prove the omnipresence of Christ, may be happily illustrated by a parallel text in the Old Testament. Jesus said, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Compare this with the assurance given to Moses by the God of Israel. Exod. 20: 24. "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee." No being could make the one or the other of these promises, but he who was present in all places and acquainted with all things.

The evidence in proof of the omniscience of Christ "is irresistibly conclusive." Solomon says to Jehovah, "Thou even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men." Again, Jer.

17: 10. "I Jehovah search the heart, I try the reins, to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." In the same manner, Jesus says to the church in Thyatira, "and all the churches shall know, that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." "If this be not a direct and unqualified claim of a peculiar divine prerogative, there is no meaning in human language; and to search the Scriptures for clear and satisfactory knowledge must be a vain and fruitless task. Even if Christ had simply said, 'all the churches shall know, that I search the reins and hearts;' this would have been enough for the argument; because the passages above cited do most emphatically appropriate the searching of the heart to God alone. But the terms in which he expresses himself are much more definite. They evidently proceed upon the express assumption, that this is the exclusive prerogative of one Being only. They confirm the appropriation to God, of his universal and intuitive knowledge of the heart, so distinctly marked in the former passages: 'All the churches shall know,' not merely that I search, but, 'that I am HE that searcheth the reins and hearts.' I might without hesitation rest the omniscience of Christ on this one proof."* You may notice however, how exactly this language respecting himself accords with what is said of him during his abode on earth:—"He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify to him of man; for he knew what was in man."

Arians endeavor to invalidate the argument drawn from the attributes of Christ in proof of his Deity by saying, that the attributes which are ascribed to him in Scripture, are ascribed to him in a secondary or subordinate degree. But such a meaning of the passages referred to, is not suggested to us by anything in the passages themselves. For if, in these passages, God the Father were substituted for Christ, without any other alteration, no one would suppose that the attributes spoken of are to be taken in a secondary sense. Will it be pretended that this is signified

* See Wardlaw's Discourses.

by the fact of their being ascribed to Christ? But to say, that they must be understood in a secondary sense, because they are ascribed to Christ, is to assume that Christ is not truly divine; which is the point in debate. If a secondary sense were intended, there would be special reason to expect that this sense would be notified to us; because such notice would be necessary to guard us against a pernicious mistake on a subject, in which the glory of God and our own spiritual interest are deeply concerned. But it is not only true, that nothing is found to intimate a limited or secondary sense of the words which ascribe divine attributes to Christ, but that much is found to show, that they must be understood in their highest sense. For they are applied to one who is often called God, and to whom divine works and honors are ascribed. And surely it is reasonable to consider such a one to be eternal, almighty and omniscient in the proper sense of the words. This is only making the Bible its own interpreter.

Some however have been led by this principle to a different conclusion. Dr. Clarke asserts that "Christ derived his being from the Father, that he received from him his divine power, authority, and other attributes, and so is in all respects subordinate to the Father." To prove this, he quotes those passages which declare, that all power is given to Christ; that all things are delivered to him of the Father; that he was appointed and sent by the Father, etc." Now this mode of reasoning would be satisfactory, were it not for the fundamental and obvious principle, that the character exhibited by Christ in that incarnate state in which he acted as Redeemer, was an *assumed character*, and that it is in this character that the marks of derivation and inferiority belong to him. If any think it strange, that Christ should be so frequently, and in such various forms, exhibited in this subordinate character; it is sufficient to refer to a remark before made, that it is chiefly in the character and office of Redeemer, that the Scriptures have undertaken to reveal Christ; and that it is therefore perfectly natural, that they should most frequently speak of him as possessing those marks of dependence which belong to him in that character. Enough has been said in former Lectures to show

that these marks of derivation and inferiority in his assumed character and office furnish no proof against the divine dignity and glory of his original state.

I shall glance at another consideration, which shows the soundness of the argument from the attributes of Christ; namely, that understanding the texts which attribute divine perfections to Christ in their proper sense, agrees best with the common, practical views which are given of Christ as a Saviour. We are directed to look to him, to come to him, to call upon him, to trust in him, and to obey him, as a complete Saviour. He is represented as forgiving sin, as keeping his people in his hand, and giving them eternal life. Now these directions and representations have a much more intelligible and important meaning, if we consider Christ as possessing divine attributes in the full and proper sense, than if we should understand the subject otherwise. Indeed it is difficult to affix any natural and satisfactory meaning to the directions and representations referred to, unless the Lord Jesus Christ is considered as truly possessing divine power, knowledge and goodness.

Now if the above quoted texts, when taken by themselves, are most naturally understood in their proper sense; if there is nothing in the respective contexts which requires a different sense; if the general representations which are made of his character and offices, and the affections we are required to exercise towards him, manifestly imply that he has the attributes of the Godhead; and if the marks of subordination and dependence which he bears in his incarnate state, are easily reconciled with the divine glory of his original character; then we are supported in the conclusion that he does truly possess the attributes of Divinity, and in his own proper, original character, is "God over all."

My next argument in proof of the Deity of Christ will be drawn from *his works*. I shall first attend to the work of creation. From the many passages which relate to this subject I shall quote only three. John 1: 3. "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." Col. 1: 16, 17. "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that

are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." Heb. 1: 10, "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands."

On these passages, considered as subjects of criticism, I would just remark, that if there is any doubt whether proper creation is denoted by ἐγένετο, which is rendered "were made," in the first passage; that doubt is removed by the word ἐκτίσθη in the second, which is admitted by all to express the idea of creation. And if there is any possibility of a doubt whether the creation spoken of in the first and second passages means the creation of the natural world, or whether it means the spiritual creation accomplished in redemption; that doubt vanishes when we attend to the passage quoted from Hebrews; for the changeable perishing nature here spoken of cannot belong to the new spiritual creation in the kingdom of grace, and must therefore relate to the natural world. I see not how there can be any reasonable doubt that these passages conclusively prove the Deity of Christ. For if God the Father were here substituted for Christ, no man would ever think of denying that the work of creation is attributed to him in the most proper sense. And this is as much as to say, that there is nothing in the language of the inspired writers, which does not favor our construction, namely, that Christ is in the proper sense, the Creator of all things in heaven and earth. So that if any contend for a different construction, namely, such a one as implies that Christ is only an instrument of creation, or a dependent agent employed by God in that work, they must defend their construction on one of these two principles; first, that the terms used cannot be understood in their proper sense, simply because they are applied to Christ; or secondly, that they cannot be so understood, because the sense is qualified and restrained by something in these or in other texts.

If they take the first of these principles, my reply is, that this would be a begging of the question.

Let them then take the second principle, namely, that the sense of the passages, where the work of creation is attributed to Christ, is qualified and restrained by something in these or other texts. In favor of this view, the following things have been advanced.

It has been said that the work of creation was performed by God alone without any assistant or partner. For example, Isa. 44: 24. "I am Jehovah, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself." Christ, therefore, as Unitarians reason, cannot be the Creator; and those texts, which declare that all things were made by him, must be understood in a metaphorical sense.

Reply. If the Bible does in some places explicitly declare, that all things were created by Jesus Christ, and in other places, that God is the sole Creator; the natural conclusion is, that *Christ is God.* "The Creator of all created beings cannot be himself a creature, — and he who is not a creature must be God." If Unitarians still insist, that a lower sense must be put upon the texts which declare that all things were created by Christ, and urge that the texts, taken in that lower sense, afford no proof that Christ is God, I still ask for what reason they give this lower sense? And if they say that these texts must be taken in a lower sense, because they ascribe creation to one who is not God; I reply again, that this would plainly be a petitio principii, which sound logic never admits. And if they should take another ground, and say, that our argument to prove from the work of creation that Christ is God, implies that, inasmuch as God the Father is Creator as well as Christ, there must be two Gods; they would certainly say this without sufficient reason. For who has ever disproved or can disprove the truth of the position, that the Father is God and Christ is God, and yet there is only one God? After all that Unitarians have said, it remains perfectly clear, that the Father and the Son may be distinct and different in some respects, so that they may be properly spoken of with distinct appellations, *as two personal agents*, and yet be one and the same as to divine nature or perfection; that is, one and the same God.

I have before made the remark, and here repeat it, that the

common theory rests upon the principle, that the Bible is its own interpreter. The inspired writers expressly declare that God is the sole Creator. They declare as expressly, that all things were created by Jesus Christ. This representation that God is the sole Creator, and yet that all things were created by Jesus Christ, identifies Christ with God. This is the Trinitarian theory. Though Christ is in some respects distinct from the Father; yet, in his original character, he possesses the same divine perfections, and is one with the Father. This clearly results from the principles of right interpretation. In coming to this conclusion, we show a proper respect to every part of the Bible. But if men first assume that Christ is a being in all respects distinct and different from God; they will necessarily be led to use the most unjustifiable liberties with all those texts which speak of Christ as Creator. For if God is the sole Creator, and Christ is not God; then he cannot be Creator, except in some secondary or metaphorical sense; and this sense must be imposed upon all those parts of Scripture, which declare that Christ is Creator, notwithstanding the plainness and force with which they declare it.

Another argument which has been urged by Arians is, that two of the texts, quoted at the beginning of this Lecture, do by themselves contain evidence, that Christ is Creator only in a limited or metaphorical sense. "All thing were made by him, δι' αὐτοῦ — "*through* him," says Dr. Clarke; who quotes Philo to prove, that this word denotes the ministering cause, not the efficient. He also says that Philo condemns it as an absurdity of language, to say that any thing is made διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ.

In opposition to this criticism of Philo, and this reasoning of Clarke and other Anti-trinitarians, I urge the fact, that this same word διά is applied to God the Father, and must be confessed by all to denote the highest efficiency concerned in creation and providence. Rom. 11: 36. "Of him and through him, δι' αὐτοῦ, are all things." There is no question but this is applied to God Supreme. It cannot signify ministerial or instrumental agency, as the above criticisms imply, without making God his own instrument. Again, in Heb. 2: 10, διά is used in application to God the Father both

with an accusative and a genitive. "It became him δι' ὅν, for whom all things, and δι' οὗ, by whom all things, etc." Now if διά is applied to God, to denote his proper efficiency in the production and preservation of all things, why may it not denote an equal efficiency when applied to Christ? Certainly there is nothing in the meaning or use of the preposition διά, which forbids this. So that the argument of Dr. Clarke and others, which is founded on the sense of this word, is wholly destitute of force.

On this point, the authority of Schleusner and other philologists who agree with him, must be considered as cancelling at once the criticism of Philo and Clarke. According to Schleusner, the first use of διά is to denote the principal efficient cause, "causa efficiens et quidem principalis." And of the three instances of this signification which he gives, the first is the very text above quoted, John 1: 3, "Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο."

In connection with the foregoing remarks, I shall make a quotation from Allix in his "Judgment of the Jewish Church," introducing it by a passage from Priestley, who on this point differed so widely and so justly from the Arians. Priestley says, "why might not the power of self-subsistence be imparted to another, as well as that of creating out of nothing?" "He must have lost his reason," says Allix, "who imagines, that God can make a creature capable of creating the universe. Grant this, and by what character will you distinguish the creature from the Creator? By what right then could God appropriate, as he doth very often in the Old Testament, the work of the world's creation to himself, excluding any other from having anything to do in it but himself? The Arians who worship Jesus Christ, though they esteem him a creature, — may teach that a creature may be enabled by God to become a Creator; but for us, who deny that anything but God is to be adored, we reject all such vain conceits of a creature being any way capable of receiving the infinite power of a Creator."

But if the texts themselves, which attribute the work of creation to Christ, contain nothing to qualify and limit their meaning; it is still alleged by Arians, that there is evidence from other texts, that Christ is not the proper Creator, and that the passages which re-

present him as Creator, must be understood to denote a mere instrumental agency.

They have often mentioned those texts which speak of Christ as sustaining the character of a man and a mediator, as the minister of God, acting by his appointment, and with power derived from him.

In reply to this, I shall only say what is maintained by all Trinitarians, that Christ as a man, and as a mediator, was indeed the minister of God the Father, and acted by his appointment, and with power received from him. At the same time it must be remembered, that humanity was not the original state of Christ, nor mediatorship his original character and office. Proving that he received power from the Father and exercised an instrumental agency in the works he performed as man or mediator, proves nothing as to his original character, or as to the works he performed in that character.

The texts which call for special attention in relation to the subject now in hand, are those which declare that God the Father performed the work of creation *by* the Son. Eph. 3: 9. "God who created all things by Jesus Christ."* Heb. 1: 2. "By whom also he made the worlds." From such texts Arians argue, that the agency which Christ had in creation was merely an instrumental or ministerial agency.

On this mode of understanding these texts, I have a few remarks.

The first is, that it is difficult to reconcile this view of the subject, with the language frequently employed respecting the agen-

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* It is proper to remark in regard to this text, that the most learned and judicious critics omit the phrase, "by Jesus Christ;" so that the passage reads, "God who created all things." According to this, the Apostle speaks of the mystery which was hid in God, the Creator of all things. While I would not be forward to embrace a new reading, I should feel it to be a fault to pay no respect to the results of enlightened and sober criticism. If the reading of Griesbach and Hahn is received in Eph. 3: 9, the passage in Heb. 1: 2. is the only one which presents the subject of creation under that peculiar aspect. And this is, I think, a circumstance which deserves to be remembered; although I shall not avail myself of it so far as to give it any special influence upon my reasoning.

cy of Christ in creation. This language attributes the proper work of creation to Christ as unequivocally and strongly, as any which is ever applied to the Father. "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." "All things were made by him." It is difficult to conceive why the inspired writers should use such language, if they meant only to say, that Christ was employed in the work of creation, as creatures are employed in other works of God.

Again; the Scriptures represent, that Christ is the proper *end* of creation, and that the *glory* of it belongs to him. "All things were created by him and *for* him." In Heb. 1, the manifest object of the writer is, to show what glory belongs to the Son of God. With this view, he cites from the Old Testament a passage which exhibits him, as the Maker of the heavens and the earth. What else could he intend, but to show that Christ is entitled to the honor of Creator?

And yet the Scriptures expressly teach, that God, or Jehovah, created the world *by himself alone*, and that all the honor of being Creator belongs exclusively to him. These passages are totally irreconcilable with those which ascribe to Christ the work and the honor of creation, unless Christ is admitted to be truly God.

I might here add the remark which has often been made, that the inspired writers, are exceedingly careful to guard the prerogatives of God against the least infringement, and to keep us from giving any part of his glory to another. And we well know, that one of his highest prerogatives is the work of creation; and that one of the highest honors which he claims, is the honor of that work. How then can the Scriptures represent, that either the work of creation, or the honor of it, belongs in whole or in part to Christ, unless they mean to teach that Christ is God?

I must add, that the representations which the Scriptures make of the attributes of Christ, best agree with the doctrine that he is the proper Creator. If he possesses such wisdom and power as the inspired writers ascribe to him, and if he is before all things,

the first and the last; it is perfectly consistent to believe that creation is properly his work.

Moreover, if we suppose, with many of the ablest Trinitarians, that an instrumental and subordinate agency is, in the passages referred to, ascribed to Christ in his original character as the second person in the Trinity; still the subordination must be considered in such a light as not to imply any inferiority of nature or perfection. And certainly there is no absurdity in this view of the subject. For the Father and the Son may, for aught that appears, equally possess all divine perfections, while in respect to the order of operation, the Father is first and the Son second. Even in human relations there may be an official subordination, as between a father who is a general or a king, and a son who acts under him, without implying inferiority in respect to any personal attribute. When we make the Bible its own interpreter, and take the different places which relate to the subject in one connected view, our conclusion must be, that Christ is not subordinate in any such sense as to infringe the doctrine of his proper Divinity. There is no other view of the subject that will agree to the different parts of revelation, or consist with the principle, that those different parts are to explain and qualify the sense of each other, and to give us a complete view of the character of Christ. If we should infer from one class of texts, that Christ is subordinate to the Father, not only in office and the order of acting, and as to his manhood, but in all other respects, and is really inferior in his own proper nature, and so is not truly God; this would be more than these texts require, and would do manifest injustice and violence to a multitude of other texts, which expressly attribute Godhead to Christ. On the other hand, if we should infer from those texts which declare his Godhead, that he is God, or one with the Father, in such a sense, as to exclude the doctrine of his distinct personality, or of his subordination to the Father in his official work; we should do violence to the other class of texts which plainly teach such a personality, and such a subordination.

Here we shall easily discover the radical error of those who

adopt any form of Arianism. From those passages of Scripture which teach that Christ is subordinate to the Father, commissioned by him, etc., they infer that Christ is not possessed of the same nature or perfection with the Father, but is inferior in all respects. Whereas the passages are fairly interpreted, and the obvious design of them fully answered, by the supposition that he is subordinate in office and in the order of operation, and by the supposition that his commission related to his character and work as Mediator. Two persons perfectly equal in everything which belongs to character, may, in the accomplishment of a certain object, act together in such a manner, that in the order of operation, one shall be first, and the other second; one chief, the other subordinate. A priority and subordination of this kind, would furnish no proof of superiority or inferiority in any of the essential properties of character. From the nature of the work to be accomplished, or from something in the relation existing between them, — though unknown to us, — there might be sufficient reason for what may be called a subordination of one to the other, though they are perfectly equal in nature. So here; from the nature of the work of redemption, and even of creation, there may be a reason which lies beyond the reach of our intellect, why the Father and the Son, though partakers of the same perfection, should, in accomplishing those works, act together in a particular order; — and the relation eternally existing between the Father and the Son, which lies so far out of the field of our intelligence, may also afford a reason why the Son, though possessed of all divine perfections, should be subordinate to the Father, and should undertake the work of mediation, rather than the Father.

This, I am aware, is an unfathomable subject. On this account it is peculiarly necessary for us to adhere closely to our guide, and not attempt to be wise above what is written. I have aimed merely to give the word of God as a whole, its proper and consistent sense, and to guard against every method of interpretation, which would supersede the obvious sense of any part of revelation relative to the character of Immanuel.

I cannot close this part of the discussion better than by the fol-

lowing quotation. "If we were to set ourselves to devise terms for the express purpose of conveying, as explicitly and unequivocally as possible, the idea of Supreme Divinity, we should find it difficult to select any better fitted for our design, than those which are used in the verses cited in regard to creation. What could we say more, than that by him all things were created, that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; that he is before all things, and by him all things consist? If that Being *by* whom all things were created, and *for* whom all things were created, who is before all things, and by whom all things consist, be not the Supreme God, we may well ask, 'Is there a God at all?' And if there be a God, how shall we describe him?"*

I shall now pursue the argument for the Deity of Christ from his other works, beginning with *the miracles which he wrought during his public ministry.*

What is generally called the power of working miracles, was in many cases given to prophets and apostles. But a little attention will show, that the power by which the miracles were really effected, never properly resided in those, at whose instance they were wrought. It was not by the exertion of any proper ability or strength of Moses, that so many plagues were brought upon the land of Egypt, and that the Red Sea was opened for the escape of the children of Israel. It was not by the exertion of a power, which properly belonged to any prophet or apostle, that the sick were healed and the dead raised. The apostles disclaimed this. Miraculous works were wrought by the proper, efficient power of God, through the instrumentality of his servants; in other words, the miracles were wrought by God, in connection with some word or action of theirs, — which word or action just signified that the miracles were then to be wrought for a particular purpose, *by divine power.* When the power of working miracles is, in such cases, ascribed to men, it must be understood in a very inferior sense.

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*Wardlaw's Discourses.

In this inferior sense, miraculous power might be given to a child; that is, God might, if he pleased, raise the dead, or stop the sun in his course, at the word of a child, or at the motion of his hand. Indeed God might create a world in connection with the whisper of a man, who had not power to speak, or with the motion of his finger, when he had not power to lift his hand.

If these remarks are well founded, it is obvious that the greatest possible increase of power, in this subordinate sense, would make no approximation towards a proper creative power. But it is only in this subordinate sense, that the power of working miracles or the power of creation can be communicated to any dependent being. Power, in a dependent being, must always be held and exercised according to the will of the supreme Being. It is therefore, and must of necessity be, exceedingly different in its nature from power in God. God works by his own independent power. But when a created being performs works, either common or miraculous; in strict propriety of speech, God works through or by him as an instrument, though an active instrument, or agent. Agreeably to this, we find that the works which are in a lower sense attributed to the prophets and apostles, are represented as in the highest sense the works of God. Nor is it conceivable, that any work can be performed by created beings, which does not depend ultimately on the will and agency of God. No power, except that which is constantly and wholly derived from God, can belong to any creature. The existence of a proper efficient and independent power is plainly inconsistent with the nature and condition of a created being.

I shall now inquire, *whether the miracles of Christ prove his Divinity.*

Respecting this I remark, first, that *the miracles of Christ prove his Divinity by proving that he is the promised Messiah.* The prophets not only predicted the coming of Christ, but described his character. They attributed to him divine names, perfections, works and honors. The miracles which Jesus wrought, were expressly designed to prove him to be the Saviour who was to come. And when they proved this, they proved him to be all that the prophets represented the *Messiah* to be. And what did they

represent him to be? What character did their writings attribute to the Messiah? Did they not represent him to be Divine? Did they not ascribe to him the works and honors of God? If then miracles prove him to be the Messiah, they prove his Godhead. For the Scriptures exhibit no Messiah who is not truly Divine.

Here look at the superficial manner, in which this subject is sometimes treated. You are told that the works of Christ and his resurrection from the dead prove him to be the Messiah, the Saviour of the world; that this is what we are required to believe; and that if we believe this, the demands of Scripture are satisfied, whether we believe Christ to be divine, or not. But when Christ undertook by his miracles to prove that he was the Messiah, did he undertake to prove an unmeaning or ambiguous proposition? And is it an unmeaning or ambiguous proposition, that the Scriptures require us to believe? To prove Jesus to be the Messiah, is to prove him to be what the Scriptures declare the Messiah to be. And to *believe* him to be the Messiah, is to *believe* him to be what the Scriptures declare the Messiah to be. No other belief can answer the demands of the gospel.

It appears, then, that the miracles of Jesus prove his Godhead, by proving him to be the promised Messiah, inasmuch as the Messiah is represented by the prophets to be Divine. I might say also that they prove his Godhead by proving the truth of the doctrines he taught, one of which is the doctrine of his proper Divinity.

But, secondly, a proof of the Divinity of Christ arises from *the peculiar manner and circumstances of the miracles themselves.* There is, in several respects, a wide difference between Christ, and all others who have wrought miracles.

1. Christ wrought miracles *in his own name*, and in *a peculiarly authoritative manner.* "He cast out the spirits with a word." "With authority and power he commanded the unclean spirits, and they came out." "He spake and it was done." "He said, be thou clean, and immediately the leprosy was cleansed." When there was a great storm, "he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great

calm." How different was this manner of proceeding from that of others who were invested with miraculous power. Had the apostles undertaken to work miracles in this manner, they would have been chargeable with arrogance and impiety. Paul did indeed say to the spirit of divination that possessed a damsel,—"I command thee to come out of her;" but he took care to show that he did not speak in his own name, and by his own authority; for he said, "I command thee *in the name of Jesus Christ* to come out of her." Prophets and apostles were jealous for the honor of God, and took care to guard those who beheld their miraculous works, against supposing that they wrought them in their own name, or by their own power. And surely the meek and lowly Jesus was not less humble than his disciples, nor less jealous for the honor of God. Nor would he have guarded less watchfully than they, against the least appearance of doing miraculous works in his own name, and by his own power and authority, had he been a mere man. His manner of working miracles was suitable to that Being only, who created all things by the word of his power; who said, "Let there be light and there was light."

2. In working miracles, *Christ exercised his power according to his own will.* The leper said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus said, "I will, be thou clean." "The Son quickeneth whom he will." Thus Jesus identified himself with him, "whose counsel shall stand, and who will do all his pleasure."

3. *Christ gave the power of working miracles to others.* "When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts to men." "He granted signs and wonders to be done by the hands of Paul and Barnabas." The disciples remembered and acknowledged this. They said, "Lord even the devils are subject to us through thy name." When the multitude marvelled at the cure of the lame man, Peter expressly referred them to the Prince of life;—"And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong." "Eneas," said Peter on another occasion, "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." Does any one doubt whether Peter, when he wrought these miracles, believed Christ to be Divine? In what other manner would he have treated him, had he really believed in his eternal power and Godhead?

4. Christ wrought miracles *for his own glory*. Creatures, however exalted, must prostrate themselves before God, and give all glory to him. Holy beings, whether in heaven or earth, have always done this. — But the end of Christ's miracles is represented to be *his* glory. When he turned water into wine, "he manifested forth his glory." He said of the sickness of Lazarus, "this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." Here the distinction between Christ and his apostles is most remarkable. Who ever said, that such miracles were wrought that Paul or Peter might be glorified thereby? The apostles utterly refused to receive the honor of any of the works they performed. When Peter saw that the people wondered at the miracle he had done; he said, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk." Paul and Barnabas showed the same spirit. When the people began to honor them on account of a miracle they had wrought, and were about to offer sacrifices to them, "They rent their clothes and ran in among the people, crying out and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." But did the highest honors ever ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ for his works, cause any dissatisfaction in him? Instead of this, he *required* those honors. His miracles were wrought for this very end, that he might be glorified thereby.

Now although miracles may be performed by mere men, that is, through their instrumentality, and so cannot, by themselves, be proof of the Deity of those who, in this instrumental sense, perform them; yet, as the miracles of Christ were performed in his own name, by his authoritative word, according to his will, and for his glory, and as all the miracles which were wrought by his disciples, were wrought by power communicated from him, and in his name; his miracles, and I would say the miracles of his disciples also, being wrought in his name and by his power, plainly prove him to be Divine. This argument acquires additional strength, when the miracles of Christ are taken in connection with other works of his, not yet mentioned, particularly his sustaining and governing all things, saving his people, and judging the world.

"By him all things are sustained." This is often mentioned in Scripture as a peculiar work of God, and an illustrious display of his power. The ascription of this work to Christ is a conclusive proof of his Deity. It also helps to establish the views already given of his miracles. If the Lord Jesus Christ sustains all things; there is no reason to doubt that he wrought miracles by his own power, and it is no matter of wonder, that he wrought them by a word of command.

The *work of salvation* proves the Godhead of Christ. He who saves sinners, must perfectly know their hearts, their circumstances, and the malice and power of their enemies. He must be in all places, ever ready to hear their prayers, and to rescue them from temptation and danger. He must be able to recall their wandering steps; to subdue and forgive all their iniquities; to order all their concerns; to sanctify them; to support them in affliction; to cheer them in the hour of death; and finally to present them faultless before the throne of his Father. The Saviour must do all this for every single believer, and for all the millions, who are redeemed from sin. His eye must be upon them every moment. His power must be constantly exerted, and his grace constantly displayed, in their behalf. Let any man consider what it is to be the Saviour of sinners, and then say, whether any one but Jehovah is adequate to the work.

The same remarks apply to the work of final judgment. The judge of the world must be perfectly acquainted with the hearts and lives of all men, both saints and sinners; must have a complete knowledge of all their circumstances during their probation; — of every privilege they enjoyed; of every difficulty and temptation they had to encounter; of every thought and emotion of their hearts; of every word they uttered; of every action, whether good or bad, open or secret, which they performed; in short, of everything which from first to last pertained to their condition in this life, or had any influence in forming their character. He must also have a perfect knowledge of the divine perfections, and the concerns of the divine government, and must be able to distribute rewards and punishments to the countless myriads of angels and men, with infallible justice and equity. Who can be

competent to this, but Jehovah, whom the Scriptures expressly represent as the Judge of the world.

I shall just glance at one general objection to the argument from the miracles of Christ, as stated by Dr. Priestley. "Christ always spake of himself as receiving his doctrine and his power from God, and again and again disclaimed having any power of his own. 'Verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, etc.' This is inconsistent with the idea of Christ's having any proper power of his own more than other men."

My first reply is, that this view of the subject cannot be admitted, without implying a heavy charge against Christ. How could one who had no proper power of his own more than other men, perform the most stupendous miracles in his own name, and by a word of command, and give his disciples power to do the same miracles, without the least intimation that they were in any danger of overrating his agency, or giving him too much honor? — I say, how could one, who had no power of his own more than other men, do all this, without arrogating to himself that glory which God will not give to another? Now as the sense which Unitarians give to the Scriptures bears so hard upon the moral character of Christ, we should certainly be slow to receive it.

My second reply is, that when Jesus says, "the Son can do nothing of himself," he may intend merely to assert his perfect union and co-operation with the Father. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." I am far from thinking myself able to fathom the profound subject here brought before us. But in my humble judgment, the sense which is conveyed by this and other texts taken together, is plainly this; that the Son does not act separately from the Father, but that they are perfectly united in will and operation — that they have a joint agency in the same works. The passages quoted by Priestley, when taken in their proper connection, admit of a construction perfectly easy and consistent, upon the principle of Christ's true and proper Divinity.

But I have one more reply, namely; that those texts which assert that Christ received power from the Father, acted according to the will of the Father, etc., respect Christ in his assumed or official character, not in his original or divine character — they respect him as man, not as the Logos, the second person in the Godhead. "There are two classes of texts, both contained in the same book, both claiming to have their testimony received as of the same authority." One class represents Christ as a man, and attributes to him all the properties and circumstances of a man. The other class represents him to be God, and attributes to him all the perfections and works of Deity. "Now is there any principle of reconciliation between these apparently contradictory texts? Is there any ground on which both may be consistently believed? There is such a principle — there is such a ground, and besides it there is no other. It is to be found in the double view which the Scriptures give of the person and character of Jesus, as God and man." — "Admit that double view, and the difficulty vanishes. The testimony of the Scriptures, which at first appeared so inconsistent, becomes one testimony. On this principle, we cease to wonder at the seeming contrarieties. We perceive them to be merely apparent, nay to be such as we had every reason to expect. We find language respecting him of different complexions, according as he is spoken of under one or the other view of his person. If the language respects him as man, it represents him as having the properties, and as being in the circumstances of a man. It speaks of him as dependent upon God, receiving all from him, praying to him, etc. If it respects him in his divine character, it represents him as having all the attributes and performing all the works of Jehovah. Now if this is a principle, which in fact does produce harmony and consistency in the word of God, while the rejection of it gives rise to difficulties without number; is not this of itself a strong presumptive evidence that the principle is correct? This may be reduced to a general rule of interpretation, namely; of two contending systems, that one ought to be preferred, which not only affords a natural explanation of the particular texts by which it seems to be itself supported, but at the same

time furnishes a satisfactory principle of harmony between these and those other passages, which have the appearance of countenancing its opposite."*

* Wardlaw.

LECTURE XXVII.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST PROVED FROM THE WORSHIP RENDERED TO HIM.

THE Scriptures require men to worship God, and God only. And as they are consistent with themselves, if they teach that religious worship is to be rendered to Christ, it must be on the principle of his being God. This is a general view of the argument. But besides this, some of the passages to be quoted show directly, that those who paid religious homage to Christ did, in fact, regard him as God. In such cases, the Godhead of Christ is not merely to be inferred from the consideration of his being worshipped, but is put beyond all doubt by the authority of those who worshipped him.

My present business is to show from the Scriptures, that Jesus Christ is the object of religious worship.

1. Are there any *precepts* which require men to worship the Redeemer?

Heb. 1: 6. "When he bringeth the first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." The inspired author is here showing the vast superiority of Christ over the angels; and among other evidences of this, he says, all the angels were required to worship him in his incarnate state. And if the angels were required to worship Christ when he became man; surely those who are inferior to angels, and who are besides under far greater obligations to him then they, must be required to worship him in the same incarnate state. There can be no reason why the angels should worship him, which does not operate with equal and even greater force upon us.

All the precepts which require men to *believe* in Christ, and to

trust in him, imply a requisition of religious homage. This might be made to appear, from the obvious nature of the faith and trust which we are to exercise towards Christ, and especially from the fact, that all religious faith and trust are expressly commanded to be exercised towards God alone; which must be on the principle, that they partake of the nature of that supreme regard, of which God is the sole object.

But after the manifestations which were made in the Old Testament of the divine glory of the Messiah, there would seem to be little occasion for any express requisition of worship in the New Testament. As soon as the first begotten was brought into the world, and was exhibited in his real character as the Messiah, the consciences and the hearts of the pious instantly prompted them, in conformity with the example of the heavenly hosts, to render him religious worship.

2. Consider more particularly *the example of the saints.*

A comparison of different parts of Scripture has led the most learned and judicious divines to conclude, that the Angel of the covenant, and the Angel of Jehovah, mentioned in the Old Testament, was the same person as the Redeemer, revealed in the New Testament. This being admitted, as I conclude from various considerations it must be, — all the instances, in which religious worship was rendered to that Angel, are proofs that Christ is the object of religious worship. For surely if the saints under the former dispensation, with the little knowledge which they had of the glory of the Redeemer, rendered him religious homage; believers, with the superior knowledge of his glory which the new dispensation affords, must be under superior obligations to render him religious homage. Further; if we take the New Testament, as the infallible expounder of the Old, we cannot avoid the conclusion, that some of the prayers recorded in the Psalms, were in reality addressed to the Saviour.

After these few general remarks, as to the saints under the former dispensation, I would direct your attention more particularly to the disciples of Christ, especially to his apostles. Did they actually worship Christ while he was personally present with them? This is our first inquiry.

The word *Προσκυνέω*, which is rendered worship, does not by itself decide the question. The sense of the word, being various, must be determined from the circumstances of the case. If there are good reasons to conclude, that the disciples of Christ did view him as the object of religious homage; we shall of course conclude, that whenever it is said, they worshipped him, such homage is intended. On the contrary, if there is reason to think that they never regarded him in this light, but viewed him merely as a man; then the word *worship* must be understood as expressing that common respect, which is due from man to man.

Let us then repair to the inspired records. Here we find an account of the views and feelings and conduct of the disciples of Christ, especially of his apostles. On some points, particularly the necessity of his death, they were slow to understand and believe, and frequently incurred rebuke from their Lord. But the question is not, what were their remaining prejudices, mistakes and imperfections; but what were they in their brightest seasons and in their best frames? — not what degree of ignorance and unbelief did they sometimes manifest, but what was *the nature* of their faith?

The apostles were true believers. They believed in the Messiah as revealed in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. If then the Redeemer of Israel — if David's Lord — if the Lord, the Angel of the covenant, who was speedily to come in his temple — if he, who appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and Jacob, and made promises to them, and who spake to Moses from the burning bush — if he, who was thus exhibited to the former saints, was entitled to religious worship; the same exalted personage must have been entitled to the same worship in the view of those who believed on him, while he abode on earth. I reason here on the supposition, that the faith of the apostles was substantially right. And that it was right is evident, because it was approved by Christ. Though he sometimes rebuked them for the weakness of their faith, and for their unbelief; he often acknowledged them to be true believers, and owned them as his friends and followers. Though their faith was often weak and wavering; it was sincere faith — sometimes strong and triumphant.

Still the inquiry remains, what certain evidence is there, that the apostles, in the days of Christ's flesh, ever had those exalted views of his character, which would naturally lead them to render him religious worship.

An answer may be found in John 1: 14. The Evangelist, speaking of him who "was God, and by whom all things were made, — and who became flesh," says, in the name of the disciples: "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The glory which they beheld must have been the glory of the same divine person, who was the subject of discourse in the verses immediately preceding. They beheld the glory of him, who was in the beginning with God, who was God, and by whom all things were created.

Consider also the faith expressed in the same chapter by John Baptist, by Philip, and by Nathanael. It is apparent that their views of Christ were right; that their faith in him corresponded with the representations of his character in the prophetic writings, and was suited to excite supreme veneration and love in their hearts.

In Matt. 16: 13—17, we have an account of the confession of Peter. Jesus had inquired of his disciples, — "whom do men say that I the son of man am?" He finally inquired, "whom say ye that I am." Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." The views which Peter entertained, were not the result of mere human teaching, but were communicated from him who guides into all the truth. Undoubtedly Peter, under such guidance, had a right discernment of the glory of the Redeemer — such a discernment as they had, who afterwards expressly made him the object of religious worship. He had the same teacher, and doubtless had the same discernment of the glory of Christ, as Stephen and Paul had when they prayed to him.

Peter, James and John saw the glory of Christ on the mount. It was his real glory *as the Son of God.* And there is no reason to doubt, that the views which all the apostles had of the majesty,

honor and glory of Christ, when they were favored with divine teaching, were substantially the same with those of Peter, James and John.

The case of Thomas is a very striking one. His unbelief respecting the resurrection of Christ implied a groundless suspicion of the other disciples, who were worthy of entire credit, and who testified that they had seen Christ. It implied also a disregard of the predictions of the prophets, and of Christ himself, respecting his resurrection. Notwithstanding this, Christ afterwards condescended to remove his doubts in the very manner which his unbelieving heart had proposed. He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing." "And Thomas answered and said unto him, my *Lord* and my *God*. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." The change which took place in Thomas, was simply a change from unbelief to faith. Now see how his faith was manifested. "He said unto Jesus, my *Lord* and my *God*." This expression of his faith Jesus approved. Now is there any room for supposing, that his faith was different from that of the other apostles, or of the disciples generally? Jesus speaks of it as being *faith* simply; "thou hast *believed*;" and pronounced all others blessed, who without the same means of conviction had the same faith; — a faith which would of course show itself substantially in the same way, that is, by adoring reverence and love for Christ. If the faith of Thomas had not been true faith, or if the words which he addressed to Jesus had not been suited to express true faith; Jesus certainly would not have manifested his approbation. And if there had been anything singular in the faith of Thomas, or in the manner of expressing it — anything which essentially distinguished it from the faith of other Christians; Jesus would not have spoken of other Christians generally as having the same faith.

It would confirm the interpretation I have given relative to the faith of Thomas, to show that other apostles and disciples afterwards, who were guided by inspiration, actually had a faith which expressed its holy fervors in the worship of their Saviour.

I might also refer to the passages, in which the apostles showed their belief in the unlimited knowledge and power of Christ.

The several things I have laid before you do, I think, satisfactorily prove, that believers in Christ, during his personal ministry, considered him as the proper object of religious homage, even without any reliance on the meaning of the word *worship*.

But while, independently of the meaning of that word, I have been showing that the apostles did really consider Christ as the object of religious homage, I have shown also, that the word *worship*, when used to express the reverence which the apostles manifested for Christ, was undoubtedly intended to point out true religious homage.

You will keep in mind, that the weakness of faith, the various errors and prejudices, and the slowness to understand, which the apostles so frequently showed in their personal intercourse with Christ, cannot invalidate the evidence which, in their more favored seasons, they gave of higher and better views of his glory, and of a disposition to render him religious worship.

It is also to be remembered, as a point of peculiar moment, that Jesus Christ, who well knew the tendency of mankind to superstition and idolatry, and was of all men the most humble, and the most concerned for the honor of his Father, never, in any instance, showed the least dissatisfaction with the highest veneration and praise offered to him by his disciples — never took the least care to set limits to the respect which they might feel for him — never gave them the most distant intimation that either they or others could possibly exceed just bounds in their love and reverence for him; but on the contrary, always manifested his approbation in proportion to the degree of veneration and homage which they exercised towards him.

The argument which I have begun to exhibit, is derived from the manifest belief and conduct of the apostles and other early disciples of Christ. Thus far we have considered the belief and conduct of the apostles during Christ's abode on earth. We are now to inquire how it was with them and with other disciples after his ascension. And as we proceed, you will have the satisfaction to

see new light reflected on that part of the subject, to which we have already attended. For if the apostles immediately, after the ascension of their Lord, did actually render him religious worship; and if they did this without the least hesitation, and with every appearance of its having been their familiar practice; we shall have still stronger reason to conclude that they *previously* considered Christ as an object of worship.

We shall first consider the passages which contain *examples of the actual worship of Christ.*

Luke 24: 51, 52. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." Observe that the worship took place after the ascension. "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." And then "they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem." From a comparison of this text with Acts 1: 9—11, it appears that the message of the angels immediately followed the ascension, and preceded the worship; — "while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"— "Then returned they to Jerusalem." Their worship was as really subsequent to Christ's ascension, as their returning to Jerusalem. Now the supposition of a common respect, or civil homage, can have no place here; for it was the worship of one, who had been parted from them and carried up into heaven. Such worship could not have been offered by them, nor received by him, except on the ground of his omniscience. It is worthy of particular notice, that after his ascension, they worshipped him *immediately*, and to all appearance *as a matter of course.* So that it cannot be supposed, that the duty of worshipping Christ was one of the new things which the apostles were taught on the day of Pentecost.

There is another instance besides this, of worship rendered to Christ before the day of Pentecost. When the apostles were about to cast lots for the choice of Joseph, or Matthias, to fill the

place of Judas; they prayed and said, "Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." It is evident that this prayer was addressed to Christ. For, in the first place, this same title Lord, was given to Christ by his apostles just before his ascension, Acts 1: 6. Indeed this title when used by the apostles, is generally applied to Christ. This is conceded even by Unitarians. Secondly, it was Christ who first chose the apostles; and they would naturally apply to him to determine who should fill the place of Judas the apostate. Thirdly; the apostles had before this, frequently attributed to Christ the same knowledge of the heart, which they here attributed to the object of their prayer.

We find then two instances of the worship of Christ after his ascension, before the day of Pentecost. The whole narrative, in both instances, carries on its very face, that it was no extraordinary thing, but a matter of course, a familiar practice. This I mention as of much importance; because it shows what must have been their views of Christ *before* his ascension.

The next example I shall cite of the actual worship of Christ, is that of dying Stephen. Acts 7: 59, 60. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." The word *God* is not in the original. The literal and proper version is: "They stoned Stephen, invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Christ Jesus was the object of this prayer and of that in the next verse; "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." I deem it unnecessary to take any particular notice of the methods, by which Priestley and others have attempted to evade the obvious sense of this passage. It will be sufficient to make two or three general remarks. The first is, that Stephen invoked the Lord Jesus Christ with reference to the most momentous subjects, namely, the forgiveness of his murderers, and the reception of his immortal soul to heaven. The second is, that Stephen here worshipped Christ in the very same manner in which Christ, when on the cross, had a little before worshipped the

Father. My third remark is, that Stephen cannot be considered as committing any error, because it is expressly declared that he was "full of the Holy Ghost." Any one who wishes for a further illustration and defence of the true meaning of this passage, I refer to the Discourses of Wardlaw, which are written with remarkable candor, acuteness, and judgment.

Let us now look into the Epistles, and notice examples of prayer actually addressed to Christ. 1 Thess. 3: 11 — 13. "Now God himself even our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way unto you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another, and towards all men." Here the Lord Jesus Christ is called upon, in connection with the Father, to direct certain events of providence; and then he is again addressed by himself as the author of Christian graces. 2 Thess. 2: 16, 17. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, — comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." In this place, Christ is associated with the Father in a solemn prayer for the most precious spiritual blessings; and in the order of address is put first. "The Lord Jesus Christ, and God our Father." This is the order also in one of the benedictions. I advert to this circumstance, not surely as intimating any superiority of the Son to the Father, but merely to show that when the Father is put first in the order of address, it affords no proof of the inferiority of Christ, who is put second.

2 Cor. 12: 8, 9. "For this thing," that is, the thorn in the flesh, — "I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Nothing can be plainer, than that Paul directed his prayer for deliverance to that same Lord, in whose promised strength he trusted and triumphed. And you will observe too, that the Apostle seems evidently to have offered prayer to Christ, as a matter of course, a familiar practice.

Christian Psalmody was addressed to Christ. Col. 3: 16. "Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Compare this with the testimony of Pliny, who says, the early Christians sung hymns *to Christ, as to God.*

Add to these instances, which might be multiplied, the forms of benediction, which are all brief prayers for divine blessings upon churches and individual Christians. These prayers are sometimes addressed to Christ alone; sometimes to the Father and the Son; and sometimes to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Such concise, comprehensive prayers for spiritual blessings upon Christians were frequently offered up by the apostles; and in about half the instances upon record, were offered up to Christ alone.

Under the general head of religious worship actually paid to Christ, we may properly rank the ascriptions of glory to him in the Epistles, and in the Revelation. 2 Tim. 4: 18. "To whom be glory both now and ever." 2 Pet. 3: 18. "To him be glory both now and forever." Rev. 1: 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever and ever." Rev. 5: 11–14. "I beheld and heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. And the four living creatures said, Amen." These passages need no comment. If they do not show that supreme honor was rendered to Christ, it is impossible for the language of earth or heaven to do it. — I only add, that the church of Christ followed the examples recorded in Scripture, and introduced the name of Christ into the earliest doxologies of which we have any knowledge.

Having considered various examples of the actual worship of Christ, we shall, in the next place, attend to *those texts which give such a description of Christians as implies, that they regarded Christ as the object of worship.* This argument deserves the more attention, because it has not generally been placed so high, nor exhibited so fully, as its importance evidently requires.

It is manifest that Christians began immediately to be distinguished and known by this mark, *that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Acts 2: 21. Peter applies to Christ the declaration of the prophet Joel: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." That this is meant to be applied to Christ, is evident from the context and from the quotation of the same prophecy, Rom. 10: 13, 14. The Lord, whose name is to be invoked in order to salvation, is the same Lord, who is the subject of apostolic preaching, and the object of faith.

Acts 9: 13. Ananias said to the Lord who appeared to him in a vision, "I have heard by many of this man," that is, Saul — "how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that *call upon thy name.* But the Lord said go thy way." To put it beyond all doubt that the Lord, to whom Ananias said this, was Christ, it is only necessary to observe what Ananias said to Saul just after: "Brother Saul, *the Lord*, even *Jesus* hath sent me." Here we find that Christians were described by Ananias as those who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. That the word here used actually means invocation, I should think no one could doubt, when Ananias was himself invoking the name of Christ, at the very time when he used it. This was a description of Christians with which Ananias was familiar. At that early period, it had become a common practice to designate believers, as those who invoked the name of the Lord Jesus. Shortly after, when Paul began to preach Christ in the synagogues, "all that heard were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed them *who call on this name* at Jerusalem?" In the same manner Paul, in his Epistles, speaks of it as a significant title of believers, that they invoked the name of Christ. "The same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon

him." He directs his first Epistle to the Corinthians, thus: "To the church of God which is at Corinth — with all that in every place *call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.*" To Timothy he says, "Follow after righteousness — with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

The two classes of texts which I have above quoted, reflect light on each other; and, taken together, add to the certainty of the conclusion to which each class by itself would lead. The various examples which the New Testament affords of the actual worship of Christ by his disciples generally, particularly by his inspired apostles, are indeed sufficient to remove all reasonable doubt as to his being the proper object of religious worship. But when we find, that Christians were described and known by this mark, that *they invoked the name of Christ*, and that they were familiarly denominated, "*those who called upon his name*," we arrive at certainty. With this common description of Christians before us, we are sure we have not mistaken the examples of worship referred to; and with these examples of worship before us, we are sure we have not mistaken the import of this description of Christians.

I shall close this Lecture with a practical reflection.

We have seen that the apostles and early Christians, in various instances, rendered religious worship to their Saviour. We have seen too, that Christians were early distinguished by the fact, that they invoked the name of Christ; and that this was so much their practice, that they were commonly known by the title of *those who called upon the name of the Lord Jesus.* — But how is it now? I ask not how it is with those who reject the Deity of Christ. But how is it with those who are called orthodox, and who profess to believe that their Saviour is divine? How is it with ministers, and with private Christians? Is it so much our practice, to address prayer to Christ our Lord, that we are or might be distinguished by that circumstance? Are our fellow creatures around us naturally led to denominate us, those who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus? On the contrary, is it not comparatively a rare thing for those who minister at the altar, as well as for private Christians, to direct their thanks and supplications to the Saviour?

And when they do it, is it not sometimes apparent that they do it with a kind of hesitation and fear, as though they might after all be treading on forbidden ground? Alas! how have the wretched speculations and controversies of these last days marred that free, affectionate spirit of Christian piety, which showed itself among the apostles and early Christians! Oh! happy lot of those who, instead of coldly reasoning to defend the Godhead of Christ against the objections of others, and half believing it themselves, make it an essential part of their devotional exercises; who do not merely undertake to *prove* the *lawfulness* of invoking the name of Christ, but actually address themselves to him in daily prayer, importunately seeking of him every spiritual blessing, giving him constant praise, and tasting the joys of those to whom he manifests himself as he does not unto the world. When we soberly think on this subject, we may well be startled at ourselves, that we should ever suppose any labored arguments to be necessary. It seems to me that any man, whose habits of thinking and of devotion are formed upon the model of the Scriptures, and according to the example of the best men in the best times, would be as much surprised at our attempting to prove that the *Lord Jesus Christ* is the proper object of worship, as if we should attempt to prove the propriety of worshipping *God the Father.*

LECTURE XXVIII.

IS CHRIST THE OBJECT OF SUPREME WORSHIP?

THE question now to be considered is, *whether the worship which the Scriptures authorize us to render to Christ is supreme, or only subordinate.*

That Christ is the object of a subordinate, inferior worship, and of that only, has been the doctrine of Arians generally. It properly and consistently belongs to them. But however inconsistent it may appear to modern Socinians, it was held as a very important doctrine by Socinus, and very much in the same manner with the Arians.

My design is to state the principal reasons which lie in my own mind against the hypothesis of a merely subordinate and inferior worship of the Saviour.

The Scriptures require that religious worship should be undivided and entire. Whenever they require any religious worship, they require that which is supreme. We are commanded to worship the Lord our God and him only; to call upon his name; to exalt and praise him. But in many instances, the same terms are used in the passages which point out the homage we are to render to Christ, — no obvious distinction being made between that which is due to the Father, and that which is due to the Son. For example, in the solemn and perpetual ordinance of Baptism, by which men are introduced into the visible kingdom of Christ, the same religious homage is paid to the Son, as to the Father.

In the command given to the angels to worship Christ, there is no intimation that the worship is to be otherwise than supreme; nor is there any intimation of this in the passages in the Old Tes-

tament or the New, which require us to invoke, to honor, to believe in and obey the Lord our Redeemer.

This then is the state of the argument. There are no precepts of Scripture which countenance a subordinate or inferior worship. Only one kind of worship is commanded by the word of God; and the worship due to Christ is frequently represented in the same terms with the worship which is claimed by the Supreme Being. There is nothing in the precepts of revelation, requiring love, homage or devotion to Christ, which suggests the least limitation of that love, homage or devotion, or in any way implies that it is to be subordinate, or that there is any danger or possibility of its rising above his merits.

Another and very weighty consideration is, that *there is no intimation or appearance of inferiority in the worship which was actually rendered to Christ by his followers.*

How would men naturally express themselves, who believed that the worship of Christ is to be only secondary, or inferior? How would they show this to be their belief? They would undoubtedly do it in some such ways as the following. — They would take pains to inform us, that the honor or worship which they ascribe to Christ is different in kind or in degree from that which is due to the Supreme God; — or if it is the same, that it is not meant to terminate on Christ, but merely to pass through him as a medium of intercourse, and to rest on the Father as its only real and ultimate object; — or, in the exercise of worship to Christ they would suggest some limitations, — that is, if their worship consisted in prayer, they would limit their petitions to a small number of blessings, or to blessings of inferior consequence, as we always do when we ask favors of earthly friends, — or, if their worship of Christ consisted in thanksgiving and praise, they would thank him for only a limited number of blessings, and those not of the highest value, and would be sure not to ascribe to him the highest praises, — or, if they seemed in words to render supreme worship to Christ, they would make it manifest that their language was not to be understood literally, — or they would at least give such a description of the character of Christ, as would make it impossible to suppose, that the highest worship can properly be rendered him.

The advocates of a subordinate worship of Christ do actually show their views in such ways as these. They are so apprehensive of danger, that they generally refrain from all direct addresses to Christ in prayer, either in the way of petition, or praise. When they speak of divine worship, they tell us that the Father is the only proper object of it, — that it is always to be addressed to him *through the Son*. Whether they undertake to describe the worship which is in their opinion due to Christ, or to exercise that worship themselves; they take care, in some of the ways above mentioned, to guard us against supposing that divine homage is to be rendered to Christ without limitation. Wholly to omit such limitations would in their view be hazardous. If any one does omit them, and speak of the worship of Christ, or actually render him worship, without some qualification, or some marked distinction between the worship due to the Son, and that which is due to the Father, they are ready to charge him with want of caution, if not with idolatry. If those who believe that Christ is entitled only to an inferior, subordinate worship, wish to make their belief known, and to guard against what they consider a great and hurtful mistake, they must do it in some of the ways above described.

Socinus, who maintained with great zeal, that Christians ought to invoke Christ, or direct prayers to him, took special care to guard others against supposing, that he meant to render to Christ the worship which is due to God.

"There are," he says, "two points of difference to be specially observed between the invocation of God and of Christ. The first is, that we invoke God as the first and sole cause of all good, but Christ as the secondary cause, and dependent on the first cause. The other difference is, that we call upon God, *omnino in omnibus*, with unlimited confidence, in all possible circumstances, and ask of him every conceivable blessing. But we can invoke Christ in those things only which in some way concern us as Christians, and which relate to his church. It is these blessings, and not others, that God has given Christ the power of bestowing." Though Dr. Clarke differs widely from Socinus respecting the person of Christ; he differs but little as to the religious homage which is to be ren-

dered to him. He contends, as Socinus does, for the worship of Christ; but tells us that supreme worship is due to the Father only — that all prayers and praises ought primarily or ultimately to be directed to the person of the Father.

Yates gives it as his opinion, that homage was never offered to Christ without a higher reference.

Such is the course which men pursue who deny that Christ is the object of supreme religious worship. By such language do they inculcate the principle, that the highest kind of veneration is not to be given to the Saviour.

But do the inspired writers pursue, such a course? Do they, like Unitarians, generally refrain from all direct addresses to Christ in the way of petition or praise? — You have an answer in the prayer of the apostles. Acts 1: 24. "And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all, show whether of these two thou hast chosen." You have an answer in the prayer of the first Christian martyr; in the prayer of Paul respecting the thorn in the flesh; in the constant practice of the primitive Christians, from which they were familiarly known by the name of those who call upon the Lord Jesus; and in the song of the whole multitude of the redeemed, — "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, — be glory and dominion forever."

Do the inspired writers take care to teach us, that the honor or worship which they render to Christ is not intended to terminate on him, as its proper object, but only to pass through him, as a medium of intercourse, and to rest on the Father as the only proper object of worship?

Do you find this care exercised by Christ himself? When he declares it to be the design of the Father, "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," is there any intimation that the honor to be given to the Son was not to respect him as its proper object, but only to pass through him to the Father? Is there any evidence that Christ was not considered by Thomas, as the real and proper object of the homage which he rendered him, when he addressed him as his Lord and his God?

Is there any appearance of inferior worship in the prayer of the apostles respecting a substitute for Judas? — or in the prayer of Stephen? — or in the prayer of Paul respecting the thorn in the flesh? — or in the ascription of glory to the Saviour by the redeemed? — or in any place where Christ is addressed by the saints as the object of religious homage? In the several instances here alluded to, and, if I mistake not, in all the instances, in which the Lord Jesus is addressed alone, or is treated by himself as the object of worship, he is addressed in the same way, in which it would be proper to address the Supreme Being absolutely considered. In the passages referred to, if the name of *God* had been substituted for the name of *Christ*, that is, if the apostles, Acts 1: 24, had said, "Thou, O *God*, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which of these two thou hast chosen;" — if Stephen had said, "Into thy hand, O *God*, I commit my spirit? — and if it had been said that Paul besought *God* to remove his affliction; no one would ever have imagined that the worship intended was secondary, and was not meant to rest on the Being addressed, as its proper object. And this is the same as saying, that there is not, in the passages themselves, the least intimation, that the worship was otherwise than supreme.

Again, do the inspired writers in any way inform us, that Christ is not the proper object of supreme homage, in those places where religious homage is paid to him in connection with the Father? — "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Whatever reverence or devotion is here paid to the Father, the same is evidently paid to the Son. If any would infer that an inferior kind of worship is intended, from the circumstance that the Son is placed in order after the Father; they must infer that an inferior worship of the Father is intended, from a different order in the benedictions.

1 Thess. 3: 11. "Now God himself even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." Here the same request for providential direction is preferred to the Father and to the Son, and in the same language. In the Apocalypse the

same glory and dominion are ascribed unto him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. There is no appearance of any distinction, — no intimation that Christ is not as really and properly the object of religious homage, as God the Father.

Did then the inspired writers, and other believers mentioned by them, show that their worship of Christ was not supreme, by restricting themselves in their petitions to a limited number of blessings, or to blessings of inferior value, as we do when we ask favors of earthly friends? Stephen's conduct will show. He prayed the Lord Jesus to receive his departing spirit, and to forgive his murderers — the greatest blessing he could ask either for himself or for them. — Rom. 1: 7. "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle prays that these rich, spiritual blessings may descend upon believers, not merely *from* God *through* Christ, but *from* God the Father *and from* the Lord Jesus Christ. So in 2 Thess. 2: 16, 17. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God even our Father — comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." Here there is no appearance that the blessings which are sought of Christ, are limited either in number or in importance. Yea, the fact, that the same blessings are sought from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, shows that all limitations are excluded. This petition for grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, is often repeated by Paul in behalf of believers. And to show that he does not mean to signify that these blessings are to be conferred by the Father, exclusively of the Son, or by the Son merely as the medium, or instrument, he sometimes implores the same blessings from Christ alone. — "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God." "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit."

Again. Do the inspired writers suggest, that the worship of Christ is merely a subordinate or limited worship, by confining themselves in their thanks to the mention of a small number of blessings, and those of minor consequence, and by taking care not to ascribe to him the highest praises? A few passages will

show. Heb. 13: 21. "To whom be glory forever and ever." 2 Pet. 3: 18. "To whom be glory both now and forever." Rev. 1: 5, 6. "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins, — to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." Rev. 7: 10. "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Rev. 5: 11, 12, etc. The Apostle John heard "ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth," — he heard saying, — "Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

In all these places the highest praises are ascribed to the Lord Jesus Christ, in the very strongest terms, and in a manner as distant as possible from any appearance of limitation or inferiority. No higher praises, none in more forcible or unlimited terms, are ever given to God the Father. Had the inspired writers meant it should be understood that Christ was to receive only a subordinate, inferior worship, would they have treated the subject in this manner?

Once more. Do the inspired writers suggest, *by any form of expression, or by any circumstance whatever*, that the texts above cited, which seem to render supreme worship and praise to Christ, are to be taken in a metaphorical sense? An examination of the texts will satisfy you, that there is no reason for affixing a metaphorical sense to the words contained in them, which does not exist in every other case, and which would not lead us to give a metaphorical sense to all parts of the Bible. There is the very same reason for supposing that the language is metaphorical, which ascribes the highest praises to God the Father; — unless the Scriptures are found to give such a description of the character of Christ, as clearly to show that he does not deserve and cannot receive the highest honor. That this is not the case is sufficiently evident from the view we have already taken of the names, perfections and works attributed to

Christ. If such a Being, as the Scriptures represent Christ to be, is not worthy to receive the highest honor, what being is worthy?

From this survey of the inspired writings, it must I think be very evident, that the writers do not treat the subject now before us, as they naturally would and must have done, if they had intended to inculcate only a subordinate worship of Christ; and that they are very far from suggesting any of the cautions and limitations, which the advocates of such a subordinate worship deem it necessary to give, in order to guard against being misunderstood by others, — and which they deem it important constantly to observe themselves, to avoid what in their view would be a species of idolatry. Only take a view of the manner in which Unitarians treat this subject. See how they labor, at every turn, to make you believe that Christ is not the object of religious worship. Or, if they coldly allow that some kind of worship is due to him, see how they labor to prevent you from honoring him too highly. See how fearful they are, lest the glory of the one God should be violated by the ascription of too much glory to the Redeemer. Now just turn to the Bible. Does that labor to make you believe that Christ is not the object of worship? Or when it ascribes worship to Christ, does it labor to prevent you from honoring him too highly? Does it caution you not to detract from the glory of the divine unity by ascribing glory to the Redeemer? Do the examples of worship which it affords suggest, that those who rendered that worship to the Redeemer, felt themselves in danger of raising their homage above his deserts? — or that any Christians on earth would ever be in danger of being led, by those examples, to hold him in too high estimation, or to treat him too honorably in their worship? It is infinitely otherwise. The inspired writers labor everywhere to extol the Son of God. They exhaust the powers of language to express the love and gratitude and adoration which they feel, and which they would bring the whole world to feel, towards this exalted personage. The cautious, cold respect for Christ which Unitarians show, and which they inculcate upon others, — what is it compared with the glowing affection, and the adoring praise, which warmed the hearts and

elevated the devotions of the apostles? Who could ever suppose that Unitarianism caught its spirit from the sacred pages, or that it had ever attended to the song of the heavenly hosts?

My third reason against the Unitarian notion of a subordinate, inferior worship of Christ is, that *in practice it would be attended with the utmost difficulty and perplexity.*

If Christ is to receive a worship of an inferior degree, it becomes necessary to the right conduct of our worship, that we should know the precise degree which is required. To render him either more or less, than the particular degree of homage to which he is entitled, must be an offence against truth and justice. In order therefore that we might intelligently and acceptably render to Christ the worship required, it would be necessary that we should have exact information as to its nature and degree. But what information have we? The Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is to be worshipped; but it is evident from its general representations, that it makes no difference between the worship which is due to the Father, and that which is due to the Son. And they who hold that there is a difference, must be in a state of total uncertainty as to the degree of the difference intended, and must therefore be expected to fill up the whole space between supreme worship and no worship at all, according to their several impressions. What uncertainty! What confusion! And to upright minds, what perplexity and distress! Render to Christ a religious worship, but in some way inferior to that which you render to the Father! Accordingly, one renders him such inferior worship, but as near as possible to that which he renders to God the Father. The worship of another is a little lower; of the next, a little lower still; and that of others gradually descends down to the respect which is due to a mere man. This is no fiction. It is in accordance with the various schemes of those who withhold from Christ the highest degree of homage; and it is very similar to what actually takes place among them. Thus the beauty and harmony of divine worship are destroyed, and endless jargon is introduced among Christians — a jargon resulting directly from the principle they adopt. As to the kind and degree of worship, it is impossi-

ble to be united, because there is no standard. Each one may be right, or all may be wrong. God may perchance be pleased with the worship which is rendered to Christ; but who can be sure that he is not displeased?

Before leaving our inquiry concerning the religious worship which the Scriptures authorize us to render to Christ, we must consider two passages, not yet brought into view, which represent the glory of Christ as subservient to the glory of God the Father. — John 17: 1. "Father, glorify thy Son, *that thy Son also may glorify thee.*" Phil. 2: 11. — "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*" There are some other texts of the same general character.

But it will be seen, that neither of these texts contain any mention of prayer offered up to Christ. In these and many other places, the Son of God is evidently spoken of as man and Mediator; in which character all the honor he receives is of course subordinate, and ultimately redounds to the honor of the Father who sent him. But when the apostles and other believers address *prayer* to Christ, they regard him specially in his divine character, as possessing omniscience, and other attributes of God. If they pray to him as their high Priest, their Teacher, and their Redeemer, they do indeed regard him as possessed of that perfect human nature, which was necessary to constitute him a Redeemer; but they keep in mind that the Redeemer is possessed of real Divinity also, and the worship they render him, respects him ultimately as "God over all."

It is plain that the mediatorial character of Christ does in reality presuppose and include his divine glory. When therefore we look upon him as manifest in the flesh, we are to remember that he is *God* manifest in the flesh. The idea of his divine perfection is inseparable from a right apprehension of his mediatory character. On this ground, the two different views which the Scripture gives of the Redeemer, unite in one. We behold him in his state of humiliation, and in his character as Mediator. At the same time we acknowledge his infinite condescension in assuming

this character and office. We remember his original glory. We know that divine perfection is immutably and everlastingly his. We do then at once adore him for his infinite perfection, and for his gracious condescension in becoming man for our redemption, and for all the benevolent works which he performed in his incarnate state. Thus, if we would have our regard to the Son of God correspond with the manifestation which the Scriptures make of his character, we must regard him both in his original glory and in his state of humiliation, both as human and divine; and our faith, our gratitude, and our homage must correspond with this two-fold view. And what inconsistency or difficulty is there in this, except to those who chiefly regard sounds, or are satisfied with seeing the mere surface of things, or who are total strangers to the spirit of our holy religion? Can we not exalt and adore Christ *as God*, by whom all things were made, and at the same time adore him, and confide in him as our Redeemer, who humbled himself and died for us? In our devout contemplations, can we not, with due reverence, regard the divine attributes which belong to him, — his eternal power, — his infinite knowledge and goodness — and also the attributes which belong to him, and the benefits which he bestows *as Redeemer?* If we do this, we shall render him such homage as was rendered by the apostles and early Christians, and such as is rendered by the heavenly hosts.

One more remark. The fact that the Father is glorified by the glory of the Son, is as consistent with the Trinitarian theory, as with any other. For if the Son is partaker of the same divine nature with the Father, and so is, in this highest sense, one with the Father; it will always be true that the Father will be glorified by the glory of the Son. The certainty that the glory of the Son will in all cases directly promote the glory of the Father does not result from the *inferiority* of the Son, but from *his perfect union with the Father*. The closer and more perfect that union is, the more certainly is the glory of the Father promoted by the glory of the Son.

There is one text, John 11: 4, the phraseology of which might seem to imply that the glory of the Son was the ultimate object

of what took place, rather than the glory of the Father; and which does really imply that the Father's being glorified does at the same time glorify the Son: "Jesus said, this sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" The truth expressed is, not surely that the glory of God is secondary and subordinate to the glory of Christ, but that the glory of the Father and the glory of the Son are so identified, that whatever conduces to the one conduces to the other also. We may always rest assured, that the glory which we give to the Son, redounds to the glory of the Father, and that the glory we give to the Father, redounds to the glory of the Son. We cannot honor one without at the same time honoring the other. And the more we honor the one, the more we honor the other. Thus we conform to the express will of God, that we should *honor the Son even as we honor the Father.* Origen says, "that because of the unspeakable excellence of the Divinity which Christ the Son possesses in common with the Father, there is due to him the very same divine worship as to the Father." It is thus evident that Trinitarians who worship Christ, do in reality maintain *the unity of the Godhead, and the unity of religious worship.* They regard the divine nature — the Godhead, whether in the Father or in the Son, as the real and ultimate object of supreme religious worship.

On the ground above stated, we perceive the perfect consistency of the representation in John 11: 4, with that in Phil. 2: 11. According to the first, the event mentioned was "for the glory of God, *that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" According to the other, every knee was to bow in homage to Jesus, and every tongue to confess that he is Lord, "*to the glory of God the Father.*" See here how contrary to the teachings of Scripture, and how utterly groundless is the supposition, that the glory of one of the Divine Persons can interfere with the glory of the other!

LECTURE XXIX.

THE SONSHIP OF CHRIST PARTICULARLY CONSIDERED.

One of the titles, by which our Saviour is most frequently made known to us in the Scriptures, is *the Son of God.* The importance attached to this title in the New Testament renders it very desirable, that we should obtain as clear and definite views as possible, of its import.

I shall begin the investigation by inquiring, whether the phrase, the Son of God, denoting the second person in the Trinity, is to be understood in *a literal* and *proper sense*, that is, in a sense implying the derivation of his being from the Father, or his being produced by the Father; — implying, in other words, that the Father existed before the Son, and by an act of power brought him into being.

The word *Son* originally and literally denotes the relation of a human offspring or child to a human parent, — the relation of him who is begotten to him who begets. In this original, literal sense, the father preëxists, and has an agency in giving existence to the son; so that the son is derived from the father. This literal relation of a human son to human parents is accompanied with various circumstances, the chief of which are these; that he is dependent on his parents; that he is the object of their affection and care; that he is to love, honor and obey them, and that he is entitled to inherit their substance. Now according to the principles which regulate the use of metaphorical language, the word *son*, may be applied to any one who bears a resemblance to a proper son in regard to the prominent circumstances attending the natural relation, though he has no resemblance to him as to

the origin of that relation. To justify the metaphor, there must indeed be some analogy. But so far as the suitableness of the language is concerned, it is immaterial whether the analogy relates to the intrinsic nature of the relation, or only to some of its circumstances, or consequences. If there is some analogy to the *origin* of the relation, it is still unimportant, so far as the propriety of the metaphor is concerned, whether this analogy is exact and entire, or partial. According to these principles, which might be illustrated by the use of metaphorical language in a thousand instances, the simple fact, taken by itself, that the title *Son of God* is applied to Christ, does by no means determine, whether he resembles a son of human parents, either as to the origin of the relation, that is, his being literally begotten and derived, or only as to some of the principal circumstances of that relation. The exact import of the title must therefore be determined on other principles.

And here we meet at once with considerations which appear decisive against the literal sense of the title before us.

The first of these considerations is the well known *character of God the Father*. It is utterly inconsistent with the nature of God, that he should literally be a father — that a son should be begotten of him, or that he should have a son by a proper generation. The supposition which would imply a god and a goddess, is repugnant to all our ideas of the spirituality, the immutability, and the other perfections of Jehovah.

It is manifest that God's relation to any other being can in no way resemble the relation of a human father and son in regard to its origin, except as it is the relation of Creator to a creature. God's creating another being may indeed render it suitable to call that created being a son of God. But no Trinitarian holds that the Son was produced by a creative act of the Father.

Secondly. That which the Bible makes known respecting *the character of the Saviour*, is wholly inconsistent with the idea that he is a son in the literal sense, that is, by a proper generation. If, as we believe, Christ has existed from eternity, the question is decided at once. For he who is a son in the literal, proper sense,

has a beginning of his existence; and that beginning of his existence is to be referred to his parents as preëxisting. In that respect in which Christ is literally a son, he cannot be eternal. A father in the literal sense, must be prior to the son. Proper generation, or propagation, implies a time antecedent to such generation. Now to predicate a literal generation or production of that which is eternal, is an absurdity — the same as to predicate a beginning of that which has no beginning.

A consideration of the divine perfection of Christ in a general view will show the justness of our conclusion. Human nature is *communicable*. It may be produced. But can the divine nature — can eternal and infinite perfection be produced? The two ideas are manifestly incompatible. Communication or production implies that a cause is in operation, and that under the influence of that cause, an effect is produced. But it enters essentially into our idea of the divine nature, that it is uncaused.

I am willing here to favor the doctrine of a literal generation by allowing it as great a latitude of signification as possible, understanding it to imply only a production or communication of being in some way, and overlooking the impiety of supposing a production in the same way as that which takes place in the generation of a human offspring. — Our conclusion must be, that the notion of a literal and proper generation of Christ, in his divine nature, is utterly irreconcilable with what the Scriptures teach respecting both the Father and the Son.

Here we might trace a variety of speculations and theories of ancient and modern Divines respecting the Son of God, to their proper source, or rather perhaps to one of their chief sources; namely, a cleaving to the literal sense of Scripture expressions, which are more or less metaphorical. Why do Trinitarian writers say, that Christ is "God *of* God," "very God *of* very God?" Not to signify that, as to his preëxistent, divine nature, he was really created by God or derived from God; for they hold that he *was* God, and that his divine nature or essence, and that of the Father, was one and the same; and they could not mean that the very same nature or essence was created by itself, or derived from

itself. And yet the language naturally implies this. When the Apostle says, "All things are *of* God," he unquestionably means, derived from God, or produced by him. Perhaps these authors may mean, that the Logos or Son is derived from the Father, not as other beings are, but in a peculiar sense — in a manner not to be conceived by us. But is not derivation *in any way* totally incompatible with our idea of an eternal or self-existent Being, a Being uncreated and uncaused? To say, the Son was derived from the Father, is the same as to say, he was an effect dependent on the Father as the cause. And this puts him on a level, in respect to origin of existence, with all created beings. If this is not intended, it would seem undesirable to use language which implies it. If you say, that the language of Trinitarian writers on this unfathomable subject ought not to be understood in its common or literal sense, but in a sense more or less figurative; I beg leave to say in reply, that the language they use is intended for the very purpose of *explaining* the Scripture phrase, *the Son of God.* And as it is used for the purpose of explanation, it will most naturally be understood in its plain, literal sense. And so I think it has generally been understood. But the literal sense of the phrases, "God of God," "very God of very God," has seemed to me to involve the self-contradictory idea, that an underived being is derived — that a self-existent Being owes his existence to another. And this makes it further necessary to explain the language which has been meant as an explanation of the words of Scripture. But, to my apprehension, all the explanations which have been used, fail of making the matter any more clear, and do themselves need explanation. Now does not the radical mistake lie in cleaving to the literal sense of the phrase, Son of God, and making it imply some kind of derivation or production? — something of the nature of an effect depending upon a cause? If the divine nature of Christ was eternal, so doubtless was his personality, and his relation to the Father. If his personal relation to the Father was not eternal, it must have had its origin in time, and then there must have been a time when he was not the Son of God, and when God had no Son. Hence it would follow, that God by

an act of his power gave existence to the Son. And if so, then the Son is a creature, a being who owes his existence to the will and agency of the Creator. This brings us to the scheme of Dr. Clarke and other Arians, who maintain, that the Son is a dependent being, who derived his existence, and all his perfections, from the efficacious will of God. According to Arians, Christ is God, but he is "God *of* God," a secondary, dependent God, — possessed indeed of high and glorious perfections, and worthy of worship and obedience, but not self-existent, not eternal, not the Supreme Divinity. This is the doctrine of the Arians; and this, I think, is the doctrine which the phrases "God *of* God," "Light *of* Light," naturally convey. Now why should Trinitarians, in their attempts to *explain* their doctrine, make use of terms, that naturally express a doctrine which they reject? It is this and similar language of Trinitarians which gives Dr. Clarke the chief advantage he has in supporting his views of the Trinity. He is able to quote many passages from ancient Trinitarian authors and Trinitarian creeds, which plainly imply, that the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, is in some way a derived and dependent being. And yet Trinitarians intend no such thing.

In these free remarks I have meant to animadvert merely upon the phraseology, which has been employed by Trinitarians, not upon the belief which they really entertain, and which in other ways they clearly express. I ask then, whether Trinitarians have not in this matter been chargeable with an unwarrantable and perhaps undesigned adherence to the literal sense of the Scripture phrases, Son of God, begotten of God, when applied to Christ with reference to his divine nature. If we truly give up the literal sense of these phrases, we shall no longer feel it necessary to inquire after the origin of that which had no origin, but shall be satisfied with what the Scriptures plainly reveal, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly divine; that he eternally possessed all divine perfections, and eternally stood in a personal relation to the Father, which is represented to us under the idea of the filial relation. Thus we fix the all-important point, in our minds, — the true Godhead of Christ, — his divine personality, — and his near and essential rela-

tion to the Father — this personality and this relation being as really eternal and underived, as any of the attributes of the Divine nature.

According to the views above expressed, we may, with the most evident propriety, apply the phrase, *Son of God*, to designate the Logos, the divine nature of the person of Christ, and the peculiar and incomprehensible relation which he eternally sustained to the first person in the Trinity. How far the title under consideration, that is, *Son of God*, makes known the character of the Redeemer, and his relation to the Father, is too serious a matter to be determined hastily. It cannot be doubted, that this title, and the other teachings of Scripture, afford all the knowledge of Christ which our welfare in the present state requires.

Having argued against the literal sense of the phrase, Son of God, from what the Scriptures reveal of God the Father and of Christ, I proceed to my *third* topic. And here our inquiry will be, whether the use of the phrase Son of God *in other cases*, or the epithets joined with it in relation to Christ, involve the idea of literal sonship.

The phrase is sometimes applied to the angels. But certainly they are not called sons of God in a literal and proper sense. The design of the expression is, to point out the excellence of their character, and their relation to God as his creatures and servants.

The phrase is often applied to believers. Here it seems to denote that they bear the image of God, — that they are peculiarly dependent on him, particularly for the renovation of their hearts; that they are objects of his special favor, and entitled to an inheritance in his kingdom.

It is often applied to the children of Israel collectively. God says, "I am a father to Israel."

In these applications of the phrase, which are very numerous, a literal sense is supposed by none. It is obvious, that the phrase denotes only, that those who are called sons of God, have an analogy to the offspring of human parents, as to some of the circumstances attending the filial relation. The endearing affection existing between a parent and his children, and the great kindness he

exercises towards them, is the circumstance which seems to be most frequently regarded.

The terms denoting the filial relation are used in Scripture with very great latitude of signification. Paul calls Timothy his son, and says, that he had begotten Onesimus in his bonds. He doubtless meant that through divine grace he had labored with success for their conversion and salvation. Those are called children of Abraham, who descend from him as a remote ancestor; and those too who have no relation to him except a likeness to his faith.

Inquire, finally, whether the qualifying epithets, frequently joined with the phrase Son of God, furnish proof of a literal sense. The epithet, *only begotten*, has been much relied upon by the advocates of a proper filiation. The Greek word μονογενής often signifies *beloved above others*, *most dear*. Accordingly Christ may be called the only begotten of God, to indicate his superior dignity of character, and also to show that he is in the highest degree beloved of God. The epithet *own* cannot prove that Christ is the Son of God in a literal sense; because Paul calls Timothy and Titus his *own* sons, though they were so only in a metaphorical sense.

Thus it appears that the terms denoting the filial relation, in connection with several expressive epithets, are in Scripture applied to persons so variously, that they cannot of themselves be supposed to signify a literal or proper filiation, or that origin of existence which is peculiar to a human offspring; but must be understood as indicating merely some of the important circumstances attending the filial relation.

LECTURE XXX.

WHAT IS THE PRECISE MEANING OF THE TITLE, SON OF GOD, WHEN APPLIED TO CHRIST?

As the subject now before us is of great importance in Christian Theology; and as it has been made a subject of much indefinite thought and much earnest controversy, and seems to be involved in more than ordinary perplexity; I must solicit your attention, while I pursue a discussion somewhat protracted, and perhaps circuitous, with the hope, that we may come at last to a satisfactory result.

Our inquiry is, *in what sense is the title, Son of God, to be understood, when applied to Christ?*

I answer generally, the title is to be understood *metaphorically.* But it must be remembered that metaphors have as real a meaning as literal language; and they often convey their meaning more strikingly, than any other expressions could. What then is implied in the metaphor which we are considering? In what respect is a resemblance to the literal sense denoted? And on what ground, or for what reason, is Christ called *the Son of God?* We have seen that he can bear no resemblance to a human offspring as to origin; — because the divine nature is eternal, or which is the same, without beginning, without origin.

If Christ is considered as a man, he evidently has this resemblance to other men, namely, that as they owe their existence to God's agency, so does he. But this would only make him a son of God in common with all other sons of God, yea, with all other created beings. But such a view would fall far short of the import of the Scripture phrase, when applied to Christ.

But Jesus may be called the Son of God in a peculiar sense,

on account of the *miraculous* agency of God in his conception. This view of the subject will deserve particular consideration before we close the discussion. I will only say here, that this notion of Christ's Sonship, taken by itself, does by no means reach the sublime signification which the language of Scripture evidently bears.

But it is to be further and specially observed, that Christ may be called the Son of God on account of his exalted dignity; or on account of the peculiar affection and favor of which he is the object; or on account of his filial temper; or on account of his likeness to the nature and his conformity to the will of his Father; or on account of his title to inherit the kingdom. And if it should be found that he sustains a character and office, in which *all these grounds of Sonship are joined together*, — a character and office involving *his exalted dignity*, — *his miraculous conception*, — *the peculiar love and favor of God towards him*, — *the most perfect filial temper*, — *likeness to the divine nature*, *and conformity with the divine will*, *and a title to inherit the kingdom;* there would then clearly be the utmost propriety in calling him the Son of God on account of his character and office. Here would be a combination of circumstances, which, taken separately, would justify the use of the metaphor, but which, taken together, would show that it possesses the highest degree of fitness and force. This last view of the subject seems to me to be supported by the current language of the word of God.

Look now into the New Testament, and see what was the great question that was agitated respecting Jesus of Nazareth, in the time of his public ministry.

This question was just what we should naturally have supposed it would be. The Scriptures of the Old Testament foretold the coming of a Saviour, who, from the practice of anointing those that were set apart to be kings, and priests, was denominated *the Christ — the anointed one.* It was the grand design of Scripture to testify of this exalted person. In various ways, the prophets made him known, as the object of faith and hope. His coming was regarded as a matter of such importance, that he was called the Consolation of Israel, the Desire of all nations. The Jews in

particular were earnestly looking for his advent. Now when Jesus of Nazareth came forward with his high claims, the natural inquiry would be — "Is not this the Christ?" — "Tell us whether thou be the Christ?" That Jesus was the Christ, became to his apostles the great subject of preaching, and to his followers, the chief article of faith.

Now there are many texts, in which the same great question is proposed, and the same subject of preaching and the same article of faith are stated, by using the title *Son of God*, instead of *Christ*, or in connection with it. May we not conclude from this, that the two phrases, *Son of God*, and *Christ*, must, in the instances referred to, have meant substantially the same thing. John 1: 34. John the Baptist said, "and I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." John 1: 49. Nathanael said, "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." 1 John 4: 15. "Whoso shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." Ch. 5: 5. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

It cannot, I think, be fairly doubted, that in these and many other places in the New Testament, *Son of God* is equivalent to *the Christ*, *the Messiah*, *he that should come*. It would surely be very absurd to suppose, that believing Jesus to be the Son of God, and believing him to be the Christ, are exercises of faith materially different from each other, when each of them is often represented as all that is necessary to salvation.

There are other passages, where the word Christ is used in connection with the title, Son of God. John 11: 29. "I believe," said Martha, "that thou art *the Christ*, *the Son of God*, who should come into the world." We know that nothing is more common in Scripture, than to repeat the same thing in different words and phrases, for the sake of emphasis. The High Priest said to Jesus, "I adjure thee that thou tell us, whether thou be *the Christ*, *the Son of God*." — "These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is *the Christ*, *the Son of God*."

From such examples it is clear, that these two phrases are often used in the same sense. In several instances, they are plainly

used *as convertible terms.* 1 John 5: 1. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is *the Christ*, is born of God." v. 4. "Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and v. 5. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is *the Son of God?*" Believing that Jesus is *the Son of God* is here the same thing, as believing that he is *the Christ*, in v. 1.

Observe also the report which three Evangelists make of the confession of Peter. Matthew has it, ch. 16: 16. "Thou art *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" Mark, ch. 8: 29. "Thou art *the Christ.*" And Luke, ch. 9: 20. "*The Christ of God.*" Matthew named two titles, *the Christ*, and *the Son of God;* which we doubt not had the same import; — for if they were not of the same import, and if *Son of God* denoted something higher and more important than *the Christ;* then both Mark and Luke omitted the more important part of Peter's confession.

I shall not go again into a particular consideration of the passage John 10: 33 — 36, where Jesus vindicated himself from the charge of blasphemy brought against him by the Jews. It is to my present purpose to make only one remark; namely, that Jesus justified himself for saying he was *the Son of God* on the ground, that the Father had sanctified him and sent him into the world; which seems to imply, that his having been *sanctified*, — or set apart as the Redeemer, — and sent into the world in that capacity was the reason of his being called *the Son of God.* When God the Father said in a voice from heaven: "This is *my beloved Son*, hear ye him;" he undoubtedly meant to recommend him as *the Christ, the promised Messiah.*

We may receive further light on the subject from what is said of the design of Christ's miracles. He declares what this design is, John 5: 36. "The works which I do, bear witness of me, that *the Father hath sent me;*" that is, that I am *the Christ;* as appears more clearly from John 10: 24, 25. "The Jews said, if thou be *the Christ*, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, — The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me," that is, that I am *the Christ;* for this was the thing to be proved. But in some other places, it is represented as the design of Christ's

works, to prove that he is the *Son of God*, or that God is his Father. The obvious conclusion is, that proving Jesus to be the Son of God, and proving him to be the Christ, are one and the same thing.

You will observe, that the word *Christ*, which originally signified a character or office, came finally to be used as a *proper name.* It was generally used in this manner after the resurrection, and is commonly used so now. "I believe," said the Eunuch, Acts 8: 37, "that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God;" that is, that the man, who is named *Jesus Christ*, is the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. This principle is of extensive application in the formation of proper names in all languages. A word which is first used to denote the character, office or circumstances of individuals, is finally made a proper name.

But although the titles, the Christ, and the Son of God, are titles of the same person and office; they are not perfectly synonymous. The title *Christ*, which refers to the ancient custom of anointing a man who was introduced into office as a priest or king, denotes that Jesus was invested with the office of Saviour. The other title, *Son of God*, exhibits the same exalted personage, as standing in the nearest relation to God; as having a perfect filial temper; as being the object of God's complacency, and heir to his kingdom. But notwithstanding this difference of original signification, the two phrases may be used, and evidently are used *interchangeably*, as titles of the same office. In the same way, Jesus is called the Redeemer, the King of Israel; the great High Priest, the Saviour, the Deliverer; which are all titles of the same character and office, and may be used interchangeably, though they are not strictly synonymous.

Having adduced several texts to prove that the phrase, Son of God, is a title of the character and office of Jesus, considered as the Redeemer; that it is, very frequently at least, of similar import with the Christ, so that the two titles may be used interchangeably; I shall endeavor to show, that this interpretation best agrees with other passages of Scripture which relate to the same subject.

The fact that the Redeemer was spoken of as being the Son of God, before he came into the world, is no objection against the view above given. For he was really appointed to the office of a Saviour long before his advent, and men were pardoned and saved on the ground of the atonement which was afterward to be made. He was set forth as *the Christ*, *the anointed One*, the Priest, the Messiah, the great sacrifice for sin; and was spoken of in one or the other of these characters much more frequently, than in the character of the Son of God. But it was all in the way of *anticipation*, — speaking of what would be, as though it already existed. According to this principle, the person referred to was, from the beginning, *the Christ*, *the Son of God*, the Redeemer, and began to execute his great office, though he was not in fact invested with all that appertained to it, before his incarnation. He was indeed held forth as *the Son of God;* and he was also held forth as *the Christ*, and *Shiloh* or *the sent;* and the first might be by way of anticipation, as well as the others. In Ps. 2: 7, it is said, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." That the event here signified was then future, is evident from those passages in the New Testament, where this prophetic declaration is spoken of as fulfilled under the Christian dispensation.

The two expressions in this prediction, "Thou art my Son," — and "I have begotten thee," are doubtless to be understood as a parallelism. They are different ways of saying the same thing, and equally metaphorical. Thus Paul calls Onesimus his son, whom he had begotten in his bonds, and who was of his own bowels; — three ways of expressing his endearing relation to Onesimus. The declaration of God the Father to the Messiah, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," evidently indicates *the high office of Christ; his being appointed and consecrated as a Saviour; the time of his induction into office, and the endearing relation which he sustained to the Father.* The claim of a Son as heir to an inheritance, seems to be particularly signified. For immediately after the declaration of Christ's Sonship, his inheritance is brought into view. "Thou art my Son,

this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance."

There are two particular passages in the New Testament, in which events are spoken of as an accomplishment of this remarkable prediction. Luke 1: 35. "The Angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called *the Son of God.*" Acts 13: 33. "God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee."

These two passages, and the passage in the second Psalm, must be so understood as to be consistent with each other. Let us see then what interpretation is to be given to the passage in the second Psalm. Does that text suggest the idea of a *literal generation* before the world was? This would be inconsistent with both passages here quoted from the New Testament. For the only generation referred to in the first, is that of the child who was to be born of Mary; and that which is referred to in the other, is the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Again. Does the passage quoted from Luke signify, that the fact, by itself considered, that Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary, is the great event which fulfilled the prediction in the second Psalm, and that it was this event merely, which constituted Jesus the Son of God? To this supposition I have serious objections.

One objection is, that such a sense of the prediction, though it may seem to agree with the passage taken by itself, cannot be made to agree with the other, where the prediction is declared to have been fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his being thus publicly designated to the office of a Saviour.

Another and still stronger objection is, that there is not the least reason to think, that the simple belief of Christ's miraculous conception was ever made the grand term of salvation. Can it be *this* sort of sonship that is represented to be so important? Was it *this* that Jesus labored to prove by his miracles? Was it *this* that

the apostles, in their preaching, endeavored by various arguments to evince to mankind in order to their salvation? When converts to Christianity declared their belief that Jesus was the Son of God, can we suppose that they meant merely to declare their belief *that he was born of a virgin?* "Doubtless," says Dr. Watts, "many a poor creature might become a true believer in Christ when he was upon earth by the sight of his miracles, and hearing his doctrine, without the knowledge of this particular circumstance of his birth. And doubtless many a one was converted by the apostles, without any notice of this part of the history of Christ; for we scarcely find so much as the mention of it in their preaching or writings."

Again. The whole reasoning in John 10th would, upon this principle, appear insignificant. Jesus called God his Father, that is, he called himself the *Son of God*, in such a sense as to imply that he was *God* — one with the Father. In consequence of his claiming to be the Son of God in this high sense, they charged him with blasphemy. But this is utterly unintelligible on the supposition, that Christ's Sonship consisted merely in his miraculous conception. The same may be said of the conversation which the High Priest had with Jesus. He asked him whether he was the Son of God. It is hardly supposable that he had ever heard of the peculiar circumstances of Christ's conception. It could have been with no reference to those circumstances, yea, it must have been independently of them, that he put the question. And yet Jesus answered the question as though its meaning was very plain. And plain it doubtless was to all who had read the prophets, and who understood that Jesus of Nazareth professed to be the Messiah foretold by them.

Finally. There appears to be nothing in this kind of sonship, which, by itself, would distinguish Christ so highly above all other men and all created beings, as the Son of God is distinguished. In those parts of Scripture, where the exalted character of the Son of God is most particularly set forth, we find no apparent reference to the manner of his conception; indeed there is no reference to it in any place, except where the prophet predicts and the Evangelist relates the event.

Having found that the interpretation, above mentioned, cannot be admitted, let us see now whether there is any objection against the one which is here proposed.

The phrase, *Son of God*, is generally applied to Christ as *a title of office.* When the writers of the New Testament assert that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, their meaning is, that he is *the Messiah*, — the Saviour foretold by the prophets, — the exalted personage who, according to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was to possess the highest dignity, — to stand in the most endearing relation to God, — to be the object of his special love and favor, and to inherit his kingdom.

When Jesus came into the world, the grand inquiry was, "Is this he that should come?" Is this *the Christ?* This was the question. Accordingly, we shall perceive, that every circumstance of his life which fulfilled any prediction of the prophets, — everything essential to his Messiahship, was a *proof* that he was *the Son of God* — was an *exhibition* of him in that character.

Take now the passage in Luke. "*Therefore* also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." Why? — Why, because this manner of his birth answered to that prediction of the prophet: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son; and his name shall be called Immanuel." The communication which the angel makes to Mary is, that by the power of the highest she should conceive and bear a son; and that on account of the peculiar manner of his birth, agreeing so exactly with the words of the prophet, he should be *called* the *Son of God*, that is, should be known by this infallible sign *to be Immanuel*, — to be the Messiah, — to be *the Son of God.* So MACKNIGHT: "His miraculous conception would lead men to acknowledge and call him *the Son of God.*"

According to this view of the subject, any other circumstance of Christ's birth or life, which answered to any inspired prediction respecting him, and thus designated him as the Messiah, was *a reason* for calling him the Son of God.

But this passage may have a further connection with the spirit of prophecy. It was foretold, that the Messiah should be the seed

of the woman, the son of Abraham and of David, and yet that he should be without sin, without moral stain. He must then be a *human* offspring, but not in the usual manner. If not a human offspring, he could not answer to the prophetic description of the Messiah. And if a human offspring in the usual manner, he could not, without a departure from the settled constitution of heaven, stated Rom. v, be pure from sin. Christ's being *born*, therefore, and born of a *virgin*, was in conformity with the design and scope of the predictions which respected the Messiah. He was the seed of the woman, and so was human. He was conceived through a miraculous divine agency, and so was free from the stain of sin. In this view also his conception and birth, as set forth by the Angel, was a *proof* of his *Messiahship*, and a reason for his being called *the Son of God*. "*Therefore* that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

Furthermore. The birth of Jesus was an event of such moment, that it deserved to be mentioned by way of eminence. Without the assumption of human nature, he could not fully sustain the office and actually accomplish the work of *Mediator*. What he did in saving sinners before his incarnation, was on *the ground* of the atonement, which, in his proper and complete character as Mediator, he was afterwards to make. His birth was one of the great events which introduced him into his office as Redeemer, and visibly invested him with what was essential to that office. It was the first instance of his humiliation; the great dispensation in which "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us;" the visible manifestation of himself, as the Immanuel, the Saviour of the world. An event which was so important in the economy of redemption, and which, in accordance with the spirit of prophecy, exhibited him to the world as the appointed Mediator, was surely a sufficient reason why he should be called *the Son of God*.

Come now to Acts. 13: 32, 33. "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Here

the text quoted from the second Psalm is referred to, as being a prediction of Christ's resurrection; and the resurrection is spoken of, as a fulfilment of it. But how is it a fulfilment? "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." Now it cannot be that God first brought Christ into the relation of a Son by *raising him from the dead;* for he had often declared himself to be the Son of God, before that event, and had been declared to be so by the Father. But the resurrection, having been so particularly foretold by the prophets, and by Christ himself, and having thus been made a *mark* of his *Messiahship;* it is clear that when God raised him from the dead, he declared and manifested him to be the Messiah, and confirmed all the claims which he had before made to that character. Thus we are told, Rom. 1: 4, that "Jesus was *declared* to be the Son of God *by his resurrection from the dead.*" He had been declared to be the Son of God before, by his miraculous conception, by a voice from heaven, by his works, and by the manner of his life and death. But his resurrection was a *new* and *powerful* proof. The Apostle says, "he was declared to be the Son of God *with power*, by his resurrection." In this view the resurrection of Jesus was as truly a reason for his being called the Son of God, as his miraculous conception. And why was it not a reason of the same nature? It was a mark of his mediatorial character, an open manifestation of him by an infallible sign, as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

There is another place, Heb. 5: 5, in which the words in Ps. 2: 7, are expressly referred to. "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." That is, Christ did not by his own authority make himself High Priest, or assume the honor of the Priesthood; but God the Father set him apart to that office, according as he said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." God's begetting his Son, and owning him as such, seems to be mentioned as a prophetic representation of his making Christ a High Priest. His being High Priest and being the Son of God appear to be mentioned by the writer to

the Hebrews, as the same thing. If taken otherwise, where is the pertinency of the quotation from the second Psalm? Those who understand that passage in a different way must, I think, find it difficult to see how the inspired writer confirms the Priesthood of Christ, or proves that he was called of God to that office by such a quotation. You will observe that the same subject is continued in the next verse, Heb. 5: 6, and another quotation made from the Old Testament confirmatory of the Priesthood of Christ.

In conclusion, let me remind you, that I have been speaking of what is the *frequent*, and as I think the *general* use of the title, "the Son of God," in the New Testament. But I would express myself with becoming modesty and diffidence on a subject, on which I differ somewhat from so many great and good men. I am however far from opposing those authors, who give the highest sense to the title, *Son of God*, as employed in several texts, particularly John 1: 14, and 10: 30, and perhaps Rom. 1: 3, 4. In these and some other places, where the Saviour is called the Son of God, there is doubtless a reference to his divine nature, and his eternal relation to the Father, as the second person in the Trinity. And there is generally, I think, the same high reference, when he is called *the Christ*, *the Saviour*, *the Messiah*. Indeed it is evident, that we cannot give to our Redeemer any of the peculiar titles which he bears, without an implied reference to his Deity; in other words, without an implied reference to what the Scriptures so plainly represent him to be, that is, "the Word, that was in the beginning *with God*, and *was God*" — "God over all." Still the proposition I have endeavored to maintain will, if I mistake not, be found to be true, — that the sacred writers generally use the title *Son of God* to designate *the Christ*, the Mediator, the incarnate Word, the Saviour of the world. And when Christians address the Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer, and say, *Son of God, have mercy upon us*, they regard him as *God manifest in the flesh* — as the Redeemer, who died for them and rose again, and is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. Ask them, is the *Son of God*

divine? Does he possess eternal perfection? They will answer, *yes.* — Ask them, is *the Son of God human* too? They will answer, *yes; he is divine and human,* — "God and Man in one person forever." Precious truth! Glorious mystery! May it dwell in our hearts, and be evermore the subject of our grateful and devout contemplation!

LECTURE XXXI.

DIVINITY AND PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Our present subject is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. And here we must attend particularly to these two inquiries: 1. *Whether the Scriptures teach the Divinity of the Holy Spirit;* 2. *Whether they teach his distinct personality.*

The circumstance, that the evidence proving the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, is not so copious and multiform, as that which proves the Divinity of Christ, can properly have no influence upon our faith. For neither the certainty nor the importance of any doctrine can be determined by the number of places in which it is taught. It is well known that some doctrines, considered by all Christians as of essential consequence in religion, are taught in very few passages. The proper question respecting any doctrine is, whether it is directly taught, or plainly implied, in the holy Scriptures, and what is the practical use which we are required to make of it.

Do the Scriptures then teach that the Holy Spirit is partaker of the same divine nature with the Father? This question must be answered in the affirmative, because the Scriptures attribute to the Holy Spirit those perfections, offices, works and honors, which are peculiar to the Supreme Being. According to the representations of the word of God, the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, Guide and Comforter of all good men. He inspired the prophets and apostles, and enabled them to predict future events, and to perform miraculous works. He is associated with the Father and the Son in the form of Christian Baptism, and so must be considered as the object of the same religious honor with them in

that divine ordinance. He is also associated with them in the benediction 2 Cor. 13: 14, in which divine blessings are implored from him, as well as from them. All these representations imply, that the Holy Spirit is possessed of divine perfection. For how can one, who has not infinite knowledge, power and goodness, inspire prophets and apostles, and enable them to work miracles and foretell future events? How can he sanctify and comfort all the saints, and be associated with the Father and the Son in a solemn Christian institution, and in prayer?

As the particular texts of Scripture on which the argument for the Divinity of the Holy Spirit rests, are so familiar to you, and as the method of reasoning from them is so similar to that which I have used, to prove the Deity of Christ, I have thought it unnecessary either formally to quote them in this place, or to subjoin any particular remarks upon them.

Our second inquiry is entitled to a more particular consideration. There are few at the present day, who do not admit the Holy Spirit to be, in some sense, truly divine. The opinion which we are most frequently called to controvert on this subject is, that the Holy Spirit, though often spoken of, as if he were a person, is not so literally and truly, but must be considered as the power, energy, or operation of God; and that the texts, which represent him as a person, are to be understood as examples of *rhetorical personification.*

With reference to this sentiment, I shall make only two points of inquiry: 1. Whether personal properties, relations and acts are really ascribed to the Holy Spirit; 2. How the texts which do this are to be understood.

Of all the passages which teach us the true doctrine of the Holy Spirit, those in John 14, 15, and 16, are the most particular. — "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." — "But the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." — "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the

Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." — "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." — "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Now do these passages ascribe personal attributes, relations and acts to the Holy Spirit? Some Trinitarian writers have argued from the use of the pronoun ἐκεῖνος here applied to the Spirit. But the argument is plainly inconclusive. This word, which is of the masculine gender, relates to the masculine noun παράκλητος. If the Spirit is called παράκλητος, it is a matter of course that the masculine pronoun should be used in reference to him. It does indeed appear rather favorable to the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, that he is called ὁ παράκλητος, the Comforter, or Advocate; because this, in its common use, is a personal appellation. But here the argument stops. There is no reason to think that the masculine pronoun would have been used in reference to πνεῦμα, the Spirit, had not a masculine noun been first introduced, with which the pronoun could agree in gender. Considering the genius of the Greek language, which applies words of different genders so indiscriminately, we must look upon any argument derived merely from the gender of the noun, or pronoun, as unsatisfactory. Indeed if the use of the masculine gender is here made an argument for the personality of the Holy Spirit; the use of the neuter gender in the word πνεῦμα, and in the pronouns and adjectives agreeing with it, may with equal reason be made an argument against it.

But without any reliance on such an argument as this, there is satisfactory evidence from the passages now before us, of the proper personality of the Holy Spirit.

Observe the appellation, *the Comforter*, or *Advocate*, here ap-

plied to the Spirit. Observe too, that he is distinguished from the person speaking: — "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." Observe, finally, the personal acts and circumstances attributed to the Holy Spirit, as coming, receiving, testifying, showing, teaching, hearing, speaking, abiding, being sent, convincing or reproving.

In Acts 13: 2, 4, we are taught that the Holy Spirit *called* Paul and Barnabas, and *commanded* others to set them apart to their work; and that they were set apart *for* him and sent forth *by* him. — Acts 15: 28. "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no other burden." To suppose the Holy Spirit anything but a real, distinct person, would render this language extremely unnatural. In Acts 16: 6, 7, the Holy Ghost appears *forbidding* the apostles to preach, and *preventing* them from going into Bithynia.

1 Cor. 12: 11. "All these worketh that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The Holy Ghost possesses *will*, and acts, like a Sovereign, *as his will directs.* What can imply personality more clearly than this?

I shall proceed no further in quoting the texts, which attribute personal properties and acts to the Holy Spirit; but shall bring into view another proof, arising from those texts which represent the Holy Ghost to be *the object of the dispositions and acts of men.*

In Matt. 12: 31, 32, we are taught, that blasphemy against Christ may be forgiven, but that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven. Here the Holy Ghost is distinguished from Christ, just as one person is commonly distinguished from another. "They are both spoken of with respect to the same thing, that is, blasphemy, in the same manner. And the thing mentioned is spoken concerning them universally in the same sense. If the Holy Ghost were only the virtue or power of God then present with Christ in all he did; Christ and that power could not be separately or distinctly spoken against."

Acts 5: 3, 4. Ananias is accused of *lying to* the Holy Ghost, and he and his wife of agreeing *to tempt him.* How can any one but a person, an intelligent agent, be tempted, or lied to?

Eph. 4: 30. Christians are charged not to *grieve* the Holy Spirit; and in Acts 7: 51, sinners are accused of *resisting* him. Both passages naturally imply his personality.

The most specious objection against the argument derived from the above cited texts is, that they are to be considered as examples of that bold personification, with which the Eastern style abounds. Our next inquiry therefore is, whether the texts, which thus attribute personal properties, acts and relations to the Holy Ghost, are to be understood in a literal or in a figurative sense?

"It would be both uncandid and foolish," says an excellent writer, "to deny the existence, or to question the frequency of that figure of speech, called personification; according to which personal characters are ascribed to powers and attributes, as well as to other objects which are known to possess distinct personality, or conscious existence. Wisdom, righteousness, charity, sin, and death are thus personified. But in such cases, who is ever in danger of being misled? Language of this kind occurs chiefly in poetry, or in such composition as admits the aid of poetical embellishment. If it were only in such composition as this, that the ascription of personal properties and acts to the Holy Spirit were to be found, — or if in plainer composition it were uniformly otherwise; the objection would have force. But the fact is far different. The ascription of personal characters and operations to the Spirit of God is to be found, not in the language of poetry and impassioned eloquence merely, but in the plainest prose; in the language of historical narration; of simple familiar instruction; and of laws and cautions, promises and grants; in which precision is the first and most essential requisite. What then are we to make of a book which, on the principle of the objection, requires for its just explanation that laws and promises, and the various descriptions of historical and didactic composition, be interpreted according to the same canons, as are applied to poetry and eloquence?"

"We are also to recollect that while, with regard to the Holy Spirit, the ordinary, current phraseology of the Scriptures is framed on the supposition of his personality; this is not the case with regard to anything else, which is not a person. In other cases, the

language of personification is the exception to the general phraseology. But in this, any expressions, which seem inconsistent with personality, form the exception."*

The evidence for the personality of the Holy Spirit would become still more clear and conclusive, if we should enter into a particular examination of the texts which have been alluded to, and see to what modes of interpretation they are driven, who deny that the Spirit is a person.

One of the most plausible objections against the argument just exhibited is, that the words Holy Spirit, or Spirit of God, are in some passages evidently used to signify divine operation or influence. But in reality this does not in any degree detract from the force of the argument. It is undoubtedly true, that, in some passages, the phrase, Holy Spirit, signifies divine operation or influence. But how can it be inferred from this, that it always has this signification? Will any man contend, that a word is always used in the same sense? — or, because in some places it is certainly used in a particular sense, that we cannot as certainly know, that it is, in other places, used in a different sense? The Greek word *Λόγος* has a variety of senses. It generally signifies word, speech, discourse. But in several passages in the writings of John, it unquestionably has a personal sense, designating the Christ, the Son of God. And this last sense is as clearly made out from the circumstances of the passages referred to, as any other sense is from other passages. So as to the Holy Spirit. There is no difficulty in accounting for it, upon the common principles of language, that the phrase should be used in very different senses. Suppose then, if you will, that the *Spirit of God*, or *Holy Spirit*, was first used to signify *divine operation*. It would be perfectly natural, and accordant with what takes place in a thousand other instances, that this same phrase should afterwards be appropriately used, to signify the *person*, or *agent*, whose peculiar operation is designated. *If there is such a person*, and if infinite wisdom sees fit more clearly to make him known to us; by what more

* Dwight's Theology.

suitable name could he be pointed out, than by that which had been employed to denote his peculiar office and work?

But there is another view of the subject which is equally conformed to general usage, and which I think in this case more probable, namely; that the phrase, Holy Spirit, primarily signifies the *Person*, or *Agent*, and thence comes to denote his *operation* or agency. The circumstances of the case must always be regarded, in order to determine which sense the phrase is intended to convey. Nor will it be anything strange, if in some passages, the circumstances should be such, that either of the two senses would be proper; so that we should be unable to determine clearly which of them is particularly intended. The agency or influence may be meant, or the person of the Holy Spirit with respect to his agency. To a man who holds the Scripture doctrine of the Holy Ghost, these two senses would, in some cases, come to the same thing.

I quote the following paragraphs from the Lectures of the late George Hill, D. D., as strikingly coincident with the views above set forth, and corroborative of the conclusion which I have adopted. He says: "If there are passages in which the Holy Ghost is clearly and unequivocally described as a person, then however numerous the passages may be, in which the Spirit of God appears to be a phrase meaning gifts and powers communicated to men, this does not in the least invalidate the evidence of the personality of the Spirit; because it is a most natural and intelligible figure, to express the gifts and powers by the name of that person, who is represented as the distributor of them. The true method of stating the question is, not whether it be possible to interpret a great number of passages that speak of the Spirit of God without being obliged to suppose that there is a distinct person to whom this name is given, but whether there are not *some passages*, from which the personality of the Spirit may be clearly ascertained."

"There are two passages of this last kind, to which I would direct your attention. The first is, the long discourse of our Lord, ch. 14, 15, and 16, of John's Gospel, where in promising the Holy Ghost to the apostles, he describes him as a person, who was to be sent and to come, who hears and speaks, and reproves

and instructs; as a person different from Jesus, because he was to come after Jesus departed; because he was to be sent by Christ, to receive of Christ, and to glorify Christ; — as a person different from the Father, because he was to be sent by the Father, and because he was not to speak of himself, but to speak what he should hear. The second passage is a discourse of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 12: 1—13, where speaking of the diversities of spiritual gifts, he represents them as under the administration of one spirit. It is impossible to conceive words, which can mark more strongly than v. 11 does, that there is a *person*, who is the author of all spiritual gifts, and who distributes them according to his discretion."

"You will meet with many other passages which show, that the apostles considered the Spirit as a person; and to the inference obviously suggested by all these passages, you are to add this general consideration, that as the prosopopœia, to which the Socinians have recourse in order to evade the evidence of the personality of the Spirit, appears to be forced and unnatural when it is applied to the long discourse recorded by John; so the supposition of any such prosopopœia being there intended, is rendered incredible, by our Lord's introducing after that discourse, the Holy Ghost in the form of Baptism, and thus conjoining the Holy Ghost whom he had described as a person, with the Father and the Son, who are certainly known to be persons. There is in all this a continued train of argument, so much fitted to impress our minds with a conviction of the personality of the Holy Spirit, that if the Socinian system on this subject be true, it will be hard to fix upon any inference from the language of Scripture, in which our minds may safely acquiesce."

"Your business in studying the controversy concerning the Spirit is, to examine, whether this figure of speech which is natural in some passages, can be admitted as the explication of all; or whether the impropriety of attempting to introduce it into some places where the Spirit is described, be not so glaring, as to leave a conviction upon the mind of every candid inquirer that the Scriptures reveal to us a third person, whose agency is exerted in accomplishing the purposes of the gospel."

Those who wish to discuss this subject more fully and inquire into the sense of the words, Spirit of God, or Holy Spirit, in particular texts, will be assisted by consulting Schleusner on the word πνεῦμα, Middleton on the Greek article, Owen on the Spirit, Dwight's Sermons, with Knapp's and Dick's Theology.

I shall close this Lecture with two remarks. The first relates to the manner in which the inspired writers attribute particular works to the Spirit; for example, the work of enlightening the mind, and sanctifying the heart. Those who have attentively read the Scriptures must have observed that, in some passages, this work is attributed to God the Father; as in John 17: 17. "*Sanctify* them through thy truth." In some passages, this same work is attributed to *Christ*. "He came to redeem his people from all iniquity, and to *purify* them to himself;" while in other passages this work is directly attributed to the *Holy Spirit*. This shows the mistake of supposing, as some have done, that to each of the sacred Three certain works are to be *exclusively* attributed. What seems to me the Scripture doctrine is, that divine works generally belong in common to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and yet that there are official works, as we may call them, which belong, not *exclusively* indeed, but in a *special manner*, to one of the Three. *God*, absolutely considered, sanctifies; — the *Father* sanctifies; — the *Son* sanctifies; — but the work belongs in a *peculiar* sense to the *Holy Spirit*. *He* does it, we may say, *officially*. It is indeed impossible for us clearly and fully to comprehend this peculiarity of sense in which the work belongs to the Spirit. But it is apparent from Scripture, that there is such a peculiarity; and there is no reason to doubt, that it is of such a nature, as perfectly corresponds with the distinction, whatever that distinction may be, between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

I said, divine works *in general* are attributed to each of the Sacred Three. There is one important exception. The work of making atonement for sin, and all that Christ did in his human nature, belonged to him *exclusively*. Neither the Father nor the Holy Spirit could obey or suffer for sinners. This work could be

done only by a Divine Person *incarnate* — by *God manifest in the flesh.*

My second remark is that, in a practical view, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is attended with far less difficulty, than in a speculative view. So the best Christians have found it. And those Christians who are most intent upon holy living, conform most exactly to the teachings of Scripture in regard to the Holy Spirit, and most fully secure to themselves his sanctifying and comforting influence.

Consider here the principle, that we can know nothing of the invisible God, except by means of the revelation which he makes of himself by his works and by his word. We have then only to inquire, what does the word of God teach respecting the Holy Spirit? What are the works which he performs? What are the blessings which he bestows, and the relations which he sustains? In a word, what is the revelation which he makes of himself?

In this way you learn, so far as your present capacity extends, *what* the *Holy Spirit* is. And the view which you thus obtain of the subject, is to regulate your feelings and your duties. Here all is plain and intelligible. Do you wish to know how you shall regard the Holy Spirit in your devout contemplations? Consider the work accomplished, — conviction of sin, sanctification, divine support and comfort, and preparation for the world of glory; and then consider the Holy Spirit as the Almighty Agent, who performs this momentous work. Regard him, and trust in him, as the merciful Author of all holy affections and holy enjoyments. The Scriptures make him known as standing in certain relations to the Father and to the Son. Regard him in those relations. — Would you know how you shall intelligently pray for the Holy Spirit? Pray for purification of heart, for the illumination of the understanding, for love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, faith, and all the branches of Christian holiness; — and pray for all these, with a cordial belief, that they are the fruit of the Spirit, and that you can never possess them, unless they are produced in you by his agency. In other words, pray that the Holy Spirit may be present with you, and that these excellent graces may be

wrought in you by his efficacious influence. Do you wish to determine whether you have the Holy Spirit abiding in you? Inquire then, whether you possess those holy affections, which are the fruit of the Spirit. In short, you will hold to the true Scripture doctrine on this important subject, if you acknowledge and revere the divine glory of the Holy Ghost; if you earnestly desire and seek his constant influence, and thankfully receive the precious benefits which it is the object of his mission to confer. "If any one, neglectful of these benefits, should aspire after knowledge beyond the reach of human intelligence; he would resemble those who, neglectful of the good which is near at hand, should attempt to wander among the stars, and in the attempt fall disgracefully to the ground."

LECTURE XXXII.

TRINITARIAN USE OF THE WORD PERSON.

BOTH before and since the Reformation, the word *person* has generally been applied to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. It is found equally in Catholic and Protestant creeds and systems. But in consequence of the objections of Socinians and other opposing sects, some who profess to hold the common doctrine of the Trinity, are inclined to give up this use of the word; at least they think it would have been better, if the word had never been introduced in connection with the doctrine. It will therefore be evidently proper that we should go into a more particular examination of the subject than we have done, and should carefully consider the principal reasons in favor of that use of the word *person*, which has been common among Trinitarians, and the most plausible objections against it. But before entering directly on this discussion, I shall make two preliminary remarks.

1. If any word or phrase, which is not used by the sacred writers, instead of expressing intelligibly and correctly the thing intended, is found to be generally the occasion of error; it is certainly best either at once, or gradually, to lay it aside, and to substitute in its place some other word, better suited to the end in view. For why should we be pertinacious in retaining a word or expression, which is not sanctioned by divine authority, and which really misleads the minds of men, and prevents the influence of the truth?

But 2. It should be kept in mind, that a change of words or phrases, which have been long and generally used by Christians in their creeds, in their doctrinal and practical writings, and in

their conversation and prayers, is generally very difficult, if not impossible. And it is moreover true, that a change of such a kind is, in all ordinary cases, likely to cause division and strife, and to grieve the hearts of those who love peace. It is therefore better, in most cases, that, the words which have been long sanctioned by the wisest and best men, and which have become familiar to the minds of common Christians, and have been wrought into their habits of thinking and devotion, should be retained. If they have occasioned mistakes, let the mistakes be corrected. If they have not been well understood, let them be carefully explained. If they have been used too freely, or with an excess of meaning, let them be brought back to their just limits. If they have been turned into an occasion of metaphysical disputation, let it be shown that they do not belong to the department of metaphysics, but to that of devotional and practical truth. In short, instead of attempting an innovation in the established language of religious discourse, let pains be taken, whenever the case requires, to bring that language to its proper use ; and thus, avoiding all strife, and prejudice, and unprofitable debate, let religious teachers labor to hold forth with increasing clearness the great truths of revelation, and to give them greater influence over the minds of men.

As to the word *person ;* a free and impartial inquiry will, I think, fully satisfy you, that there is no valid reason against its application to each of the Sacred Three, but many reasons in favor of such application.

It is said in the way of objection, that the word *person* is not used in Scripture to designate the distinction in the Godhead, and that we have no right to add to the language of the inspired writers.

Reply. Those who make this objection would do well to inquire, whether the same objection does not lie against themselves. For they speak familiarly of the *unity* or *oneness* of God, the *humanity* of Christ, his *inferiority* or *subordination* to the Father, and the *ageney* of the Spirit, when none of these terms or phrases are found in the Scriptures. Who that duly considers the sub-

ject, does not see, that it would be impossible to speak or write in an edifying manner respecting the meaning of Scripture, or respecting the truths and duties of Christianity, without using many words and phrases which are not used by the sacred penmen?

Suppose that we lay aside the word *person*. There is still the Scripture doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father; and the Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son; and yet the three are divine, possessed of the perfections of the Godhead. Now suppose, that in order to designate the doctrine, we say there is a distinction, or three distinctions in the Godhead. Objectors say to us, *three what?* Why, "three distinctions." They ask, *what* distinctions? Here we are brought into straits. For Socinians make distinctions, yes, "three distinctions." The Father, they say, is God; the Son is merely a man; and the Holy Spirit is the power or agency of God. We say, the distinctions we mean are of a different and higher kind. Well, then, Arians make distinctions of a different and higher kind. The Father is the Supreme God; the Son is a created or derived being, next to God, and endued by God with divine perfections; and the Holy Spirit is also, according to Clarke, a created, dependent agent, endued with divine attributes. Here are "three distinctions," and according to Clarke, three *persons*. But we mean something different and higher still. Come, then, to the Sabellians. They make "three distinctions." The Father is God, one person, the Creator and Sovereign of the universe. The Son is God, the same person, acting as Redeemer. The Holy Spirit is also the same God, and the same person, acting as Illuminator and Sanctifier. Here are "three distinctions" the Supreme Being acting in three offices, or exhibiting himself in three modes of operation. But neither are these the distinctions which we intend — the Trinity which we think the Scriptures reveal. If the distinctions intended are merely these — the one absolute Being, the only Being and the only *person* possessing divine perfection, acting himself out in different ways; then clearly there must be as many distinctions, as there are different

ways of divine manifestation. And these are exceedingly numerous. God manifests himself in the work of creating, preserving, and governing his creatures; in his care of the natural world, and of the moral world; in giving commands, promises, and threats; in actually rewarding the obedient, and punishing the disobedient. The particular ways in which he manifests his perfections towards individual Christians, and towards individual sinners; towards churches, and towards the world, are innumerable. Instead of "three distinctions," then, we ought, it would seem, to make as many as there are different modes of divine manifestation. It becomes then very evident, that our merely saying, there is a distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, fails of conveying definitely the idea which Trinitarians entertain, and leaves them to be confounded with those sects, which they regard as essentially erroneous. The Sabellian scheme, which is much the same as Swedenborgianism, and which seems at present to be the most popular of all the schemes opposed to Orthodoxy, represents the Trinity, that is, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as consisting in the three-fold acting out or manifestation of the Godhead in the three great works of creation and government, of redemption, and sanctification. But this scheme, as a careful examination plainly shows, is far from answering to the teachings of Scripture. For, in the first place, Scripture ascribes the work of creating, preserving and governing the world to the Son as well as to the Father, and the sanctification of believers to the Father and the Son, as well as to the Spirit. If the Trinity, the Divine Three, were constituted merely by these different modes of manifestation, they would evidently be confounded with each other.

In the second place; the history given of Christ in the four Gospels shows, from the beginning to the end, that he was a true and proper man. And the same is often asserted, and everywhere implied in the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. And if he was a true and proper *man*, he was a true and proper *person*. And surely he was none the less a person, because he had attributes above humanity. Where does he speak of himself, and where is

he spoken of by others, as though he was not truly and completely a *person*, because of his super-human nature? If the New Testament does not teach that Christ, the Son of God, is, properly speaking, a *person*, it does not teach the personality of Paul or Peter, and the history of our own country does not teach that either Washington or Hamilton was a *person*. If there can be any satisfactory evidence of the personality of any one, we have such evidence of the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have equally satisfactory evidence, that he is a person distinct from the Father. The supposition that the Father and the Son are one and the same person is altogether unscriptural and preposterous. If we had nothing but the bare mention of the Father and the Son, we should at once conclude that, in respect to personality, they are distinct from each other, — *two persons*. But of this we have evidence perfectly clear and satisfactory. For we find that the Father and the Son have free intercourse with each other; yea, all the intercourse which could be looked for on the supposition of their being two distinct persons. The Father speaks to the Son, and expresses his complacency in him. He sends the Son, gives him commands, confers honors upon him, and invests him with power over angels and men, and the whole creation. Now who can imagine that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks to himself —sends himself—gives commands to himself—and confers power and honor upon himself? On the other side; the Son obeys the Father, does not his own will but the will of the Father, speaks familiarly to the Father, thanks him, and prays to him. Can any one say, that the Son obeys himself, thanks himself, and offers up prayers to himself? The apostles, in numberless instances, represent the Father and the Son to be distinct persons — as really distinct from each other, as any two men are; but they never speak of them as though they constituted only one person. Even when Jesus declares that he and his Father are *one*, he does it in a direct address to the Father in the use of the personal pronouns, *I* and *thou*, and the plural, *we*, showing that the oneness intended is a oneness existing between two distinct persons; a oneness of nature, not of personality. Were it not so, it would be utterly

unaccountable that such language should be employed. The fact that they are not in Scripture called two persons, in so many words, is of no weight, as has before been shown. What I maintain is, that the Scriptures represent the Father and the Son to be two distinct persons as plainly and as fully, as they represent Jacob and Joseph to be two distinct persons. Distinct personality is, in these two cases, revealed with equal clearness and certainty. But I am far from saying, that personality in the two cases is, in all respects, the same, or that all the circumstances which belong to the one, belong also to the other. The one is a *divine* personality; the other a *human*. The personality of the Father and that of the Son are such as correspond with their divine nature, or I may say, such as necessarily result from their nature. The personal relation between the Father and the Son must then be very different from the personal relation existing between created beings. But this difference, whatever it may be, and in what way soever it may be apprehended by us, does not interfere with the existence of *real personality*. For all that can be considered as essential attributes of a person, or as going to constitute personality, are shown by the Scriptures to belong to the Father and to the Son. That the Father is a person, that is, an intelligent, moral, voluntary, individual being, that he is possessed of everything which can be considered as belonging to personality, is, I suppose, admitted by all, except pantheists. And is not the Son equally possessed of what is essential to personality? Is he not intelligent? Is he not moral? Is he not voluntary? Has he not a will distinct from the will of the Father? Does he not say, "not *my* will, but *thine* be done?" Is he not benevolent and holy, and constantly active in doing good? Is he not the object of our love and veneration, our gratitude and our confidence, our prayers and our praises? And whither has our understanding and our common sense fled, if, while we find from the Scriptures, that Jesus, the Son of God, is all that I have now mentioned, we can yet deny or doubt his personality? And as all that is essential to personality belongs to the Son of God in a far higher degree, than to any created being; a man, who can question his distinct personal character,

must surely be wanting in the faculty of clear discernment, or must be bewildered by dreamy speculations. If you will sit down to the perusal of the New Testament with a mind unshackled by any theory of human invention, and desirous to receive with meekness the manifest import of the inspired writings; you will, I am confident, be satisfied, that there is a real, a perfect, a sublime, though to us, an incomprehensible *personal relation* between the Father and the Son. And you will be so far from denying this personality, because it is in some respects, so immensely different from mere human personality, that you will for that very reason hold it to be, if possible, *more real;* or if not more real, unspeakably more excellent, more exalted, and more glorious.

I trust you will not forget that in treating this subject, I fabricate no philosophical or philological theory, and make no attempt to avoid the plain import of what the inspired writers say. My aim is to bring my apprehension and my faith to conform exactly to the *word of God*, in its plain, obvious sense. If in any respect, there is a marked peculiarity in the teachings of Scripture respecting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, I would believe and maintain that peculiarity to be exactly what Scripture represents it to be, and would most scrupulously guard against making it anything else. If there is that in this *divine* personality which is wholly irreconcilable with some of the circumstances of *human* personality, and far above the reach of our intellect; I would then charge myself to remember that I am of yesterday and know nothing, and accordingly to keep quietly in my place, as a learner, holding fast the plain, practical sense of Scripture, and attributing what is to us irreconcilable and incomprehensible, to the height and depth of the unbounded perfection of the divine nature. That Being, who is uncreated, infinite and eternal, must have many peculiarities, which place him at an immeasurable distance from created beings. All his attributes are peculiar. If any of them belong to man, it is only in a very low degree. There is intelligence and power in man. But how different from these — how far above them are the intelligence and power of God! Now if while the extent of these divine attributes and the mode of their

exercise are so different from what belong to us, we still ascribe them to God; why should we refuse to acknowledge the *distinct personality* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, because in some respects it is so different from human personality? It is true, as we well know, that human persons are not only *distinct* but *separate* individuals, possessed indeed of a nature, both corporeal and mental, of the same kind, though the individual nature of each is his own *solely*, not common to himself and to others. The intelligent nature, the mind of Paul, was *his*, and his *only*. The same mind, the same spiritual essence which belonged to him, did not and could not belong to any other person. And to suppose that the same individual spiritual essence belongs to any two human persons, would be to suppose those two persons to be one person. In other words, there are no two human persons, who so possess the very same individual human nature, that, strictly speaking, the nature of one of them is the identical nature of the other, and that if the nature of one of them, say Paul, had not existed, the nature of Peter would not have existed; that is, if Paul had not been, then Peter would not have been; — and this would be making Peter's existence depend on Paul's existence.

But it may be and undoubtedly is very different with respect to the divine nature. The Godhead may be such, and we believe the Scriptures teach that it is such, that three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, may be and are partakers of it — partakers of one and the same divine nature and yet are *three distinct persons*. I should not be ready to say, the three persons are *separate*, or *divided*; because that might indicate what is peculiar to human persons, and incompatible with the sublime relation existing between the divine persons. It may be true, and in my view is true, that *because* the divine persons *are* partakers of one and the same divine nature, their personal relation, their union, and their mutual intercourse exceed in perfection and blessedness all personal relations among created, dependent beings. This however is a subject which admits of no adequate explanation, and in some respects is far out of sight. But this is clear — that Scripture exhibits three divine persons, and yet declares that there is

only one God. Instead therefore of going about to distort, or evade, or cover up this representation of God's holy word by any misty or far-fetched theory, I would sit down humbly at the feet of the infallible Teacher, and would hold myself ready to receive whatever instruction he may be pleased to give. And I am, I freely acknowledge, much inclined to think that the marvellous and mysterious peculiarity of the three divine persons results necessarily from the marvellous and transcendent excellence of the divine nature; — that it is, in fact, a glorious and divine peculiarity, which will forever baffle all attempts of a restless, presumptuous curiosity to pry into it, and which, like the divine eternity, requires not that we should comprehend or explain it, but that we should contemplate it with reverence and prostration of soul, believe it with a cordial, implicit faith, and use it as an incitement to devotion and obedience.

But the plurality of persons in one God, it is said, is *strange* and *inconceivable*. This, in some respects, is evidently the case; but it is no objection to the truth of the doctrine. For what is the strangeness spoken of more than this, that there is nothing like it among created beings? — a strangeness or singularity which doubtless flows as a consequence from the very nature of the infinite and eternal Being. As to the *inconceivableness* of three persons in one God; I acknowledge that without a supernatural revelation, no one would have formed a conception of it, and that the doctrine, though revealed, is still far above our comprehension. As our faculties are limited, we cannot attain to a complete knowledge of any of the attributes of God. In his attributes and in the mode of his existence, there are other things which are as incapable of being explained or comprehended, as the doctrine before us. God exists without a cause and without a beginning, and of course without any relation to time. This mode of the divine existence is so different from what belongs to us or to any created beings—it is so unaccountable, and so confounding to all our habits of thinking, that we often find it difficult to believe it, though it stands before our minds in the light of perfect demonstration. And when we do really believe it, we are

aware, that there is something in the nature of what we believe, which is exceedingly singular, and beyond our comprehension. And the same is true in regard to many things in the natural world.

It is, you perceive, implied in the preceding discussion, that I use the word *persons*, not for the purpose of *explaining* the doctrine of the Trinity, or freeing it from what is mysterious, or paradoxical; but merely to express, in a brief and convenient form, the doctrine itself which we collect from the Scriptures. The sacred writers often speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and represent each of them to be truly divine. There are then, *three who are divine*. But they are not *three Gods*, as the inspired writers teach that there is only *one God*. The same writers however freely apply to each of the three the personal pronouns, and predicate of each all personal attributes, acts and circumstances. Now wishing to express all this in few words, Trinitarians lay it down as the doctrine of the Bible, that there are *three persons in one God*. And it seems to me that, if the word *persons* had never been used, and we were now for the first time to set forth summarily, in the form of a doctrine, what the Scriptures teach as to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, we should very probably speak of the three as *persons* — persons indeed in a peculiar, theological sense, but still *persons*. And I am unable to think of any other term which would so naturally occur to us, or would so justly express the doctrine of revelation, as this.

There is, I am sensible, a difficulty not capable of being solved, which arises in the mind of every one, who tries to conceive *how* three persons can be one God, or *how* one God can be three persons. But does not the same difficulty meet us, if we go back to the very statement which we find in Scripture? For while there is only one God, it is clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally divine; that the Father speaks of himself in the first person singular, *I* am, *I* reign, *I* search the heart; and that his people, as well as his Son, address him in the second person singular, and pray to him as their God and Father — all

showing that he is regarded as a divine person. We find also that the Son of God speaks of himself and is spoken to *as a person* — *I* am the Christ — *Thou* art my Son — This is my beloved Son, hear ye *him;* and that between the Father and the Son there is a constant intercourse. Similar language is used also of the Holy Spirit. He was to be sent by Christ, and to be the Advocate and Comforter of his people. "He shall take of mine," said Jesus, "and show it unto you." — Here, with the unaltered representation of Scripture before us, we are forced to encounter an equally insolvable difficulty. *How* can all this be? — this manner of speaking one to another, and one of another, — this intercourse, this mutual love, this communion and coöperation between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, when in fact there is only one God? *How* can we hold these three to be divine, without making three Gods? I repeat it, that the statement respecting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, just as it stands in different parts of Scripture, is as paradoxical, and as hard to be reconciled with the unity of God, as the statement in the Trinitarian creed; so that the real difficulty in the case does not arise from the particular *form* which the doctrine of the Trinity has received from its advocates, but from *the doctrine itself as revealed in the inspired writings.* And I must say, that all the efforts of Arians and Sabellians and Swedenborgians to solve the difficulty, do either overlook the language of Scripture, or evade its plain, obvious import.

There is a passage in Calvin's Institutes, Book I. ch. 13. § 5, which has sometimes been quoted to show, that Calvin was dissatisfied with the use of the words, "Trinity of Persons." He says, "If then the words have not been rashly invented, we should beware lest we be convicted of fastidious temerity in rejecting them. I would wish them indeed, to be buried in oblivion, *provided this faith were universally received, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the one God; and that nevertheless the Son is not the Father, nor the Spirit the Son, but that they are distinguished from each other by some peculiar property. I am not so rigidly precise as to be fond of contending for mere words.*"

That is, he was concerned only, that the true Scripture doctrine should be received; and if this were done, he would not be fond of contending about words; and he would wish that any particular *human* phraseology should, if necessary, be laid aside, provided only that the doctrine which he found in Scripture, were faithfully maintained.

But this is not all which is contained on the subject in the same chapter of Calvin's Institutes. He repeats the remark of Augustine, that the word *persons* "was extorted by necessity on account of the poverty of language on so great a subject; not for the sake of expressing what God is, but to avoid passing it over in total silence, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three." He speaks of the moderation of Augustine and Hilary, and says, it should teach us not to pass such severe censures on those who are unwilling to subscribe to expressions adopted by us, — provided they are not actuated by pride, perverseness, or disingenuousness. But, on the other hand, let us consider, he says, "the great *necessity* which constrains us to use such language, that by degrees they," that is, the persons just alluded to, "may at length be accustomed to a useful phraseology. Let them learn to beware, since we have to oppose the Arians on one side, and the Sabellians on the other, lest, by being offended that both these parties are deprived of all opportunity of evasion, they cause some suspicion, that they are themselves the disciples either of Arians, or of Sabellians. Arius confesses, that Christ is God; but maintains that he was created and had a beginning. He acknowledges that Christ is one with the Father, but whispers in the ears of his disciples, that he is united to him like the rest of the faithful, though by a singular privilege. Say, that he is *consubstantial*, and you tear off the mask from him; and yet you add nothing to the Scriptures. Sabellius asserts that the names, Father, Son, and Spirit, are expressive of *no distinction in the Godhead.* Say, they are *three*, and he will exclaim that you are talking of three Gods. Say, that in the one essence of God there is a Trinity of Persons, and you will at once express what the Scriptures declare, and will restrain such frivolous loquacity." — He adds; that if it is honestly confessed, that when the Scripture speaks of one

God, it is to be understood of a unity of substance, and that when it speaks of three in one essence, it denotes the Persons in this Trinity, — that if this is honestly confessed, we have no further concern about words. "But I have found," he says, "by long and frequent experience, that those who contend pertinaciously about words, *cherish some latent poison;* so that it were better to provoke their *resentment*, than to use obscure language for the sake of obtaining their *favor*." — "There are," he says, "according to the Apostle, three *hypostases.* — And as the Latins have expressed the same thing by the word *persons, it is too fastidious and obstinate to contend about so clear a matter.*" — Again, he says, that in the discussion of this subject, "the magnitude of the mystery reminds us, that we ought to proceed with the utmost reverence and sobriety." He then quotes with particular approbation, the remark of Gregory Nazianzen: "I cannot think of the *one*, but I am immediately surrounded with the splendor of the *three;* nor can I clearly discover the *three*, but I am suddenly carried back to the *one*." Calvin adds: "Wherefore let us not imagine such a Trinity of persons, as includes an idea of separation, or does not immediately recall us to the unity. The names of Father, Son, and Spirit certainly imply a real distinction. Let no one suppose them to be mere epithets by which God is *variously designated from his works;* but it is a distinction, not a division." The texts which he quotes show, he says, "that the Son has a property, by which he is distinguished from the Father; because the Word had not been *with* God, nor had he possessed glory *with* the Father, unless he had been distinct from him. — Besides the Father descended not to the earth, but he who came forth from the Father. The Father neither died, nor rose again, but he who was sent by the Father. Nor did the distinction commence at the incarnation; but it is evident that before that period he was the only begotten in the bosom of the Father, that he possessed his glory with the Father before the world was." But Calvin says, at the close of the chapter in which he discusses this subject: "I have not the least expectation of giving satisfaction to those, who are pleased with an intemperance of speculation."

LECTURE XXXIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY CONSIDERED AS A SUBJECT OF SPECULATIVE OR PHILOSOPHICAL REASONING.

In this last Lecture on the doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I propose, after a partial recapitulation of what has been advanced in previous Lectures, to close with a condensed examination of several philosophical theories, and of the statement in the Assembly's Catechism, respecting the Trinity.

In previous Lectures, I have endeavored very particularly to set forth and defend the doctrine taught in Scripture respecting Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Deity and Personality of the *Father* are so perfectly evident and so universally believed, that I have deemed it unnecessary to offer arguments to prove them. We see then what is the true doctrine of the *Sacred Three.* The inspired writers did not give the doctrine the form, which it has since received in systematic theology. They only furnished the *materials*, of which the systematic form of the doctrine is composed; just as the natural world has furnished the materials, out of which a system of physical science has been formed.

We learn from the New Testament how the first Christians regarded the doctrine of the Trinity; how it was wrought into their devotions, and how it influenced their life. Whom did they worship? They worshipped Jehovah, the Supreme, eternal God. The worship of any other being they considered to be idolatry, which, in their view, was stamped with the highest criminality. Thus they held the doctrine of the *divine unity;* although they never expressed it in general, abstract terms. They believed

the Father to be God, and worshipped him accordingly. But they did not believe the Father to be God *exclusively* of Christ, the Son. To him, as well as to the Father, they familiarly directed their prayers. In him they trusted. To him they ascribed divine perfections. They called him God; and all their conduct as Christians showed, that in their hearts they regarded him as God. We see too that they considered the Holy Spirit to be the Author of all saving knowledge and all holiness; that they united him with the Father and the Son in Baptism and in the benediction; and of course that they believed him to be a Divine Person. To the apostles these were obvious and practical truths. There is no room for us to suppose that they ever questioned the Godhead of Christ, any more than that of the Father. They speak of him as "God over all," "the true God and eternal life." We should certainly infer from their language, that they as fully believed in the *divinity* of Christ, as in his *humanity*. And how unhesitatingly do they represent the Holy Spirit as the Inspirer of God's servants, as the Illuminator and Purifier of the mind, and the Author of spiritual good. But there is no reason to think that they ever inquired after a *philosophical ground* of the doctrine of the Divine Three, or that they ever agitated the question, *how* God could be *Three*, and yet *One*. They never so much as hint at any philosophical considerations, which could help to reconcile Trinity with Unity. The doctrine, though plainly revealed, was deep and unsearchable, far beyond the province of human intelligence. It was a doctrine not to be *comprehended*, but to be *believed;* not to elicit the powers of speculative reason, but to sway the affections of the heart. The existing philosophy both of Jews and Greeks, was condemned by the apostles as false.

The doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as set forth in the writings of the apostles, and as exemplified in their practice and in the practice of those to whom they preached and wrote, was a doctrine of surpassing importance, and produced an abundance of precious fruits. The first Christians had no creed respecting the Trinity, except what was written in their Scriptures, and in their

hearts. At the commencement of the new dispensation, there was no such occasion, as has since arisen, for presenting this or any other doctrine in a general outline, or for reducing it to a systematic form. And if you ask, why a regular, scientific system of religious doctrines was not as necessary for Christians in the first century, as it is now; I answer by asking, why a regular, scientific system of horticulture or astronomy was not as necessary for our first parents in Eden, as it is for mankind at the present day. The fact is, that the apostles and primitive Christians were engrossed with the momentous concerns of the new dispensation. They were so occupied with their own spiritual interests, and with the work of spreading the gospel and promoting the salvation of the world, that they had no time and no occasion to systematize their principles, or to express them in abstract or philosophical terms. They never spoke, so far as appears, of *Trinity in unity*, or of the *divine essence in three persons*, or of *three persons subsisting in the Godhead.* The statements of Scripture, in all their simplicity and fulness, satisfied the first believers. To them the Lord Jesus Christ was the chief corner stone, the centre of the gospel scheme. He was God with us, the Word made flesh, living and dying and rising again, redeeming the world by his blood, reigning over all, our Lord and our God, the all in all. These statements of Scripture were easy to be understood, though infinitely sublime. Christians could grasp them, and hold them fast. Here they found no stumbling-block and no perplexity. They saw in the clear light of Scripture, that the *Father*, possessed of eternal power and Godhead, the Creator, the Supreme Lawgiver and Ruler, sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might have eternal life through his blood. The doctrine of the Father and the Son, seems to have been to the apostles free from all obscurity. From the manner in which they speak, we should judge that the doctrine was very intelligible, and suited to the capacity of the weakest believer. And equally plain was the Scriptural exhibition of the Holy Spirit. He was sent to be with the disciples in Christ's stead; to enlighten and guide them; to aid them in duty; to comfort them in affliction, and to intercede for them with groanings which could not be uttered. These teachings of

Scripture were all free from perplexity; and they plainly show how, in later times, the doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit should be set forth in common discourse, for spiritual and practical purposes.

Now genuine, original Christianity, in the very form here described, free from distortion and from human additions, might have been continued from one happy century to another, attended with all its precious fruits, had Christians lived in simplicity and godly sincerity, in mutual love, in humility, in holy diligence and fervent prayer; and had there been no occasion to defend the truth against the attacks of infidels and heretics. But even during the age of the apostles, pernicious errors began to creep in, and were afterwards propagated with astonishing boldness and subtilty, and with alarming success. And some who sustained the office of Christian ministers, not content with the purity and simplicity of the gospel and corrupted with false philosophy, labored to introduce innovations, and to re-model the religion of Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity in particular was turned into a subject of philosophical investigation; and speculative theologians, one after another, strove by human reasoning to reconcile Trinity with Unity. Schemes were advanced, which deformed and subverted the doctrine of revelation. Controversy ensued. Those who adhered to the gospel doctrine, felt themselves called upon to confute error, and to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. But even among those who professed to be on the side of orthodoxy, differences arose. These differences occasioned warm debate; and there was long and violent conflict. Some held the doctrine of revelation to be, that Christ, the Logos, was merely *like* God the Father. Others, better informed, saw that this was only a part of the truth, and therefore affirmed, that Christ was not only *like* God, but was of *the same nature* or *substance*. It was earnestly debated whether Christ was *ὁμοιουσιος, like* the Father, as the Arians held, or *ὁμοουσιος*, of *the same nature* with the Father, as was held by the other party. And it has been in opposition to Arianism, that Trinitarians have constantly asserted in their creeds, that the Son is the same in substance or essence with the Father. When Sabellians, in their attempts to bring the doctrine of the

Trinity to square more easily with human reason and experience, advanced the dogma, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are only three modes of divine exhibition, or divine action — three ways in which one and the same divine person manifests himself, like three offices which the same man may sustain; Trinitarians, intending to maintain the Scripture doctrine in opposition to this error, affirmed, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three hypostasies, or *persons*. And this *personal* distinction is still asserted in our Confessions of Faith, in opposition to the Sabellian scheme. Again, in opposition to *tri-theism*, or the notion of three Gods, it was maintained by the Orthodox, that the three persons exist *in one God;* and in opposition to those who maintained the inferiority of the Son and Spirit, it was asserted that the three persons are *equal in power and glory*. When philosophy was employed as an instrument in opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity, its friends strenuously attempted to defend it by the same instrument. They thought they could subserve the cause of Christ by philosophical arguments, and by attempting to find a philosophical basis for the Scripture doctrine; and in their attempts to find such a basis, and to show, on common philosophical principles, the consistency of Trinity with Unity, they gave free scope to a fruitful and discursive imagination, as well as to a proud speculative reason.

While I refer to these facts in the history of the doctrine, I do not undertake to determine how far Trinitarians have actually served the cause of truth by attempting to illustrate and defend the doctrine by such means. It is however a serious question, whether this and various other doctrines come properly within the sphere of our philosophy, and whether our reason can do anything better in regard to them, than to sit humbly at the feet of the inspired teachers, and to hear and understand their instruction. But it is, I suppose, too late to agitate this question. Philosophy, in large measures, has been introduced into the statement and discussion of the subject. One philosophical basis for the doctrine of the Trinity after another, one metaphysical theory after another has been brought forward by learned divines. And it seems to devolve upon us at the present day, in prosecuting the study of

theology in connection with ecclesiastical history, to examine what has been done at different periods of the Christian era, and, after due examination, to reject the false and useless, and hold fast that which is good.

But if we are to engage in such an examination, what is to be our standard? How shall we test the truth of any philosophical statement which is made of the doctrine under consideration? On what condition shall we receive or reject any theory respecting it? The reply is obvious. The test, by which we must determine the truth or falsehood of any statement of this doctrine, or any theory respecting it, is *the word of God.* If the statement or theory proposed plainly corresponds with holy writ, we are to receive it as truth. If it does not correspond with holy writ, or if, in order to maintain it, we find it necessary to give an unnatural and forced construction to those texts which relate to it, we certainly cannot receive it.

There is indeed, not unfrequently, a difficulty in applying this test. If the theory is presented in abstract, metaphysical terms, it may be impracticable to bring it into a clear comparison with the language of Scripture, which is generally simple and plain, and adapted to the common understanding. Here the very fact, that the theory proposed is so abstruse, and so manifestly different from the Scripture representation, is itself sufficient to excite some suspicion of its soundness, and is a reason why we should be slow to receive it. Not however to insist upon this; we must, in every such case, apply our intellectual powers to the subject with all possible earnestness and patience, in order to find out the real meaning of the language in which the metaphysical theory is brought before us, and then inquire whether this meaning corresponds with the obvious sense of Scripture.

The Socinian, or as it is now called, the Unitarian scheme, as commonly held, is free from all abstruseness. The terms used to express it are very plain. Hence we find it easy to test its truth by the word of God. Unitarianism teaches that Christ is man, and man only. Scripture teaches that he is not only man, but *God*, ascribing to him all the characteristics of Divinity. There

is then a palpable repugnancy between the Socinian scheme, and the word of God. The same is true in regard to the *Arian* scheme. We have seen that it is founded on a small part of Scripture, and that it overlooks all those passages which ascribe the highest perfections and honors to Christ. What is commonly called the Sabellian scheme may be stated thus: God is *one Being*, and *one Person only*, who exhibits himself to us in three ways, or under three aspects. As Creator and Preserver, he is *the Father*. As Redeemer, God incarnate, he is *the Son*. As the agent in accomplishing divine works, particularly the work of illumination and sanctification, he is *the Holy Ghost*. According to this last scheme, the Trinity is only three different modes of divine manifestation, — three different offices which God sustains, — or three ways in which he acts. Whether called Sabellianism or Swedenborgianism, the scheme denies the personal distinction which the Scripture so clearly marks between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It does indeed maintain the divine Unity, and so far is true. But the application of the Scripture test quickly shows it to be, in other respects, essentially defective and erroneous. For any one who carefully searches the word of God must see, that all which is essential to constitute personality belongs to the Son, as really as to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit as really as to the Son, and to each of the three, as really, though not in all respects in the same sense, as to Peter, James, and John. The Father loves the Son, speaks to him, sets him apart to be the Saviour, and the Judge of the world, as really as he loves Paul, appoints him to be an apostle, and gives him success in his work. And the Son loves and obeys the Father, prays to him, seeks his honor, submits to his will, and receives favors from him, as Paul or John does, only in a far higher degree. If there is clear evidence that Paul or John is a person distinct from God, there is clear evidence also that Christ is a person distinct from the Father. Thus the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have, each, the marks of divine personality, while there is only one God. This is the doctrine of Scripture. Sabellianism cannot abide the test. It is not true, because it does not correspond

with Scripture. Only make a fair attempt to read the word of God so as to bring out the Sabellian or Swedenborgian scheme, and you will find you have undertaken a hard task, and that there is an invincible repugnancy between the one and the other. When Jesus spoke and the apostles wrote respecting the relation and intercourse between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they could not possibly have had a conception in their minds like that of the Sabellians. Their scheme has been adopted, not because it is taught in Scripture, but for the purpose of avoiding the difficulty of seeing *how* the doctrine of three Divine Persons can be reconciled with the Divine Unity.

But Sabellianism can no more plead exemption from difficulties, than the Trinitarian theory. The scheme of Sabellians implies, that God, existing by himself eternally and absolutely, is the *Father;* that God incarnate, God the Redeemer, is *the Son;* and that God putting forth his agency in applying redemption, is the *Holy Spirit.* Now if this scheme be true, then before the incarnation, there was no Son of God; and after the incarnation, there was no Father; for God no longer existed by himself, absolutely, but was incarnate; and this incarnate God, who was the Son was the only God. He existed no longer as Father. What then is it for Christ to pray to the Father? It is God incarnate praying to God not incarnate. But God not incarnate no longer exists, and there is no longer any Father of Christ; for the Father joined with humanity constitutes the Son. Do you say, humanity prayed to the indwelling Deity? But according to Sabellianism, the humanity is a mere body. The body of Christ, then, prayed to the Deity inhabiting that body. But how could the body pray? And what did Jesus mean when he said, I go to the Father? Jesus was himself the Father incarnate. We have then, it would seem, one part of the Father incarnate praying to the other part, and going to the other part. Now what but a person can pray? And *to* what but a person can any one pray? The body then must be an intelligent person; the Deity inhabiting the body must be a person; and so in Christ, the Son, constituted of Deity and humanity united, there are two persons, the personal Deity, and the personal human body.

But I need not argue the matter further. Just take the Sabellian or Swedenborgian scheme with you, while you read the New Testament, and observe the manner in which Christ speaks *of himself*, and *to* his disciples, and *to* his Father, and how the Father speaks *to* him, and how his disciples *address* him, and you cannot but see, that the great aim of those who advocate the scheme is, not to fall in with the teachings of Scripture, but to find out a way in which they can hold a favorite theory, notwithstanding its glaring disagreement with the word of God.

Many have been the attempts of philosophizing Trinitarians, whose speculations have been more or less influenced by the writings of the Platonic School, to invent a philosophical or metaphysical theory of Trinity in unity. Several of the early Christian Fathers found that Plato held to a certain kind of Triad in God; and then, preferring the obscurity of heathen philosophy to the clear light of revelation, endeavored to shape the instructions of Scripture according to the doctrines of Plato. And many divines of a philosophical cast have, in later ages, repeated the same efforts. It is not my design to give you a particular history of the various theories invented by Trinitarians before and since the Reformation. But I insist upon it as of essential importance, that every theory, whether ancient or modern, and whether expressed in common or in philosophical language, should be brought directly to our infallible test, and should be received or rejected, as it is supported or not by the inspired writers.

Look now at some of these theories. Melanethon explained the doctrine of the Logos in some such manner as this. God from his infinite understanding, produced *thought*, and to this thought, which bore his image, he imparted personality, and this is his *Son*, the *Logos*. Augustine undertakes to illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity from the three faculties of the mind, memory, understanding, and will. Now it is exceedingly plain, that such speculations as these were not derived from Scripture, and can never be made to harmonize with it. Had the inspired writers entertained these conceptions, they certainly could not have expressed themselves as they did. Who needs to be told,

that the powers or acts of the mind are not *persons*, and that to attribute to them, literally, the relations and qualities of persons, would be absurd. But passing by this absurdity; if you say with Melancthon that *one* of God's thoughts may be a person, why not another? And why may there not be as many persons as there are thoughts in the divine mind? Doubtless God can *create* or *produce* as many persons as he pleases, in conformity with his thoughts or designs. But his *thoughts* are not *persons*. And the persons that God causes to exist, instead of being powers or acts *within his own mind*, are all extraneous, unless Pantheism should prove to be true, and all things which exist be found to be parts of God.

I add the following specimens of metaphysical theorizing on the subject of the Trinity, selected from Dick's Theology.

Dr. Chauncey, treating of the doctrine of the Trinity, proposes this question: "How may this great mystery be a little illustrated to our understandings?"—And he gives the following answer: "The first Being, living a most perfect life of fruition in communion, and being but one infinitely pure act, doth most transcendentally *comprehend* and *conceive himself*, beholding his own most glorious image by his infinite understanding, reflecting on himself as the chiefest good, which he enjoys in the highest mutual love and delight." "This" says Dick, "I confess is not very intelligible;" but Chauncey goes on:—"God, *reflecting upon* and *conceiving himself*, is God in the person of the *Father;* God *conceived* as his own most glorious image, is God in the person of the *Son;* God, *enjoying himself* as his own chiefest good in relation of Father and Son, with ineffable love and delight, is the third person, the *Holy Ghost*." "I presume," says Dick, "that no man will be made wiser by this pretended explanation, which tends rather to confound us, and to make us think that if this is really the Trinity of the Scriptures, it amounts to nothing. Such is the fate of attempts to go beyond our limits, and to intrude into things which we have not seen. We are either utterly lost, or amused with words in the room of ideas; or we are involved in obscurity and heresy."

Dr. Horsley, who in learning and talent had few equals, has pursued this same method of theorizing, as we see from the manner in which he states the sentiments of Athenagoras: — "The Logos hath existed from eternity in union with the Father; 'because God, being eternally rational, ever had the Logos in himself.' The sense is, that the personal subsistence of a Divine Logos is implied in the very idea of a God. And the argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and *seems to be founded in Scripture*, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the Divine Intellect exerted on itself, — from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. But as the Father ever was, his perfections have ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever active Intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its *just effect, the personal existence of the Son.*" Dick says, "This fanciful theory, for it deserves no better name, has found patrons and advocates among Protestants and Papists."

"Bishop Bull, in his learned work, entitled Defensio Fidei Nicenae, supports by the authority of the Fathers, the following propositions: 'First, the Catholic doctors have approved the doctrine of the council of Nice, that the Son is God *of* God; that is, that the Son has the same divine nature with the Father, but *communicated by the Father;* so that the Father alone has the divine nature from himself, or from no other; but the Son *from* the Father; and that therefore the Father is the fountain, origin, and principle of the Divinity, which is the Son.'" "But," adds Dick, "although these views are recommended by the authority of the Fathers, and have been very generally adopted by modern divines, I cannot bring myself to agree with them." And in another place, after admitting the eternal generation or Sonship of Christ, he says distinctly: "I cannot assent to the common opinion, that the generation of the Son consisted in *the communication of the Divine essence and perfection to him.*"

Among all the theories of Trinity which a mystical or visionary philosophy has invented, no one, I think, can be found which truly

agrees with the word of God. And if, without any knowledge of the Bible, any man should be acquainted with the best of these theories, and should receive it as the true doctrine of the Trinity; and after this should attend to the representations of the New Testament respecting the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; how would he be startled at the dissonance between these representations and the theory he had embraced! Philosophy, venturing to pass beyond its province into the region of speculation or conjecture, may teach, as it has done, that the divine nature, considered as *eternally generating* the image or idea of itself, is *the Father;* and considered as *existing* in the eternal idea or image of itself, is *the Logos*, *the Son*. But when we turn from this abstruse, metaphysical theory to the Word of God, how are we struck with the manifest incompatibility! How different are the teachings of holy writ! How simple! How easy to be understood! The Father, the Lord of heaven and earth, sent his beloved Son to save a lost world. The Son, whom all in heaven adored, took upon him the form of a servant, and after a life of holy beneficence, died for our sins, and rose again, and reigns on high; gives eternal life to believers, and is the judge of all. This Saviour possesses the attributes of the Godhead, and is to be honored even as the Father. Here all is plain, all is personal, and all is addressed to our understanding and our moral feelings. This plain teaching of Scripture is suited to be the matter of an undoubting, practical faith, of a fervent devotion, and of pure, elevated joy. But how abstruse, how fanciful and dry, and how foreign to common sense and to all our unperverted feelings, is every merely philosophical speculation!

If we undertake to account philosophically for the fact, that God exists in three persons, it may perhaps be natural for us, destitute as we are of knowledge, to indulge as others have done, in conjectures, such as these; that God, existing in an absolute, solitary *oneness*, could not enjoy the highest blessedness; that he must have one who will be the object of his perfect love, and with whom he can enjoy the happiness of divine fellowship; and in order that this fellowship may afford the highest degree of happiness, that the

being or person with whom he associates, must possess consummate perfection, and that God has therefore exerted his omnipotence to give existence to such a being, — one who possesses all his own attributes, and is, like himself, infinitely perfect. And this being or person is God's only begotten Son.

Now every such supposition involves insurmountable difficulties. It implies that God did once exist in one person; that he was once without a Son. And if the Son exists in the divine mind, or belongs to the Godhead, the supposition implies that there has been a change *in* God, — that whereas he did exist in one person, he now exists in two (or three) persons. Who can reconcile such a change in God with the immutability of his nature? And if it is said, that the change took place from eternity; I reply, that the two parts of the proposition are utterly incompatible. If God eternally existed in a plurality of persons, — if he eternally had a Son; then there was no occasion for him to wish for a Son, and to put forth a volition or an act of power to give him birth, and of course no occasion for a change; — if indeed there could be a change in what is unchangeable! Besides, the supposition that God's existing in a plurality of persons, or having a Son, was a matter of choice, and that he voluntarily produced the Son, or caused him to exist, would imply that God was not absolutely perfect in his first state — the state from which he changed, and that he preferred another state, that is, to exist in a plurality of persons. And if you say, the thing took place, not in time, but in eternity, — it makes no difference. If the change in God was *eternal*, it was still a change; and a change in *himself;* — that is, producing a second person or giving existence to a Son within his own Godhead. This certainly implies, that God, instead of being the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, was essentially mutable. It is, I must think, totally inconsistent and self-contradictory to say, that God *eternally produced* a *Son*, or *eternally imparted personality* to him, or that he *eternally caused anything* to take place, or anything to be which before was not, either in himself, or out of himself. For to say, that he *produced* such a being or *caused* such a change is the same as to say, that it was not *eternal*. For clearly,

whatever is eternal is unproduced, underived, uncaused, self-existent. Being produced, derived, or caused, properly speaking, belongs only to what exists in time, or what begins to exist. This every one must see to be true in regard to things which *are extraneous* to the divine mind. They are things created by God, whose existence begins in time, and will always be measured by time. And why does not the same conclusion hold respecting anything produced or caused *within* the Godhead? — if such a thing could be. It must have a beginning, and must exist in time. If anything is eternal, whether in the divine mind, or out of it, that thing could not be produced or derived. If there was eternally a second person in the Godhead, that person could not be *literally the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father*. These expressions of Scripture cannot mean, that Christ's eternal existence, or his divine perfection, was derived or imparted from the Father. But the sacred writers may designate Christ, as the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, to denote his being partaker of the divine nature, and the near relation he eternally sustained to the Father, a relation attended with the highest mutual affection and blessedness, and showing itself most clearly in the work of redemption.

Some writers have undertaken to prove, that there was, anterior to any revelation of the doctrine, a probability of a plurality of persons in the Godhead. They doubtless mean, that there would be such a probability in *our* view, or that such a plurality seems to us to be probable. But in what way can we form any conclusion on this subject? We have already received from revelation the idea of a divine Trinity. And this idea is wrought into all our habits of mind. How can we divest ourselves of this idea, so as to know what our judgment would be without it? Some obscure traces of a Trinity are indeed found among those who were not enlightened by revelation. But their Trinity was exceedingly dissimilar to the Christian doctrine. Plato's Trinity is often mentioned. But what was his Trinity or Triad? It was a metaphysical abstraction, taken from the powers and operations of the human mind, and applied to the divine mind; and it was as distant from the Trinity of Scripture, as the east is from the west. And

it is true moreover, that for aught we know, that dim, imperfect conception of a Trinity which Plato and others had, may have been indirectly derived from revelation. So that we cannot determine that they would ever have reached even that obscure, shadowy notion which they expressed, had they been left to the workings of unassisted reason.

Thanks be unto God, that we are illuminated by a clear light from heaven. That peculiarity in the mode of the divine existence, which we call Trinity, began to be indicated by the inspired writers under the former dispensation. The plural nouns and pronouns, and other modes of speech applied to God in the Old Testament, were evidently adapted to suggest the idea of a plurality. And it is certain, that the character and work of Christ the Saviour, as a divine Person, were often and very intelligibly predicted, so that the conception of the Messiah, as a divine Person, was not new to the Jewish mind at the time of his advent. His exalted and divine character, as the Son of God, was really apprehended by the apostles while he was with them, though far less clearly than afterwards; and it was not unknown to the unbelieving Jews; for it is very apparent that they were led by their Sacred Books, to ascribe the attributes of divinity to the Messiah, and to consider any mere man, who assumed to be the Messiah, as guilty of making himself God. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was also suggested in the Jewish Scriptures, though less clearly, than the doctrine of the Messiah. His peculiar work in inspiring the Prophets and sanctifying the people of God, was not only experienced, but repeatedly declared. But when we come to the Christian revelation, we find that, while the doctrine itself has unfathomable depths, its truth, and its practical uses to our fallen race, are made clear and certain. The New Testament is preëminently the source of our knowledge respecting the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and it is the standard by which to judge of every form given to the doctrine in creeds and theological systems.

Take now the form of the doctrine before us, in the Assembly's Catechism, which agrees with the Confessions of Faith generally

adopted by the orthodox. "There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." To this plain statement apply the test. The Scriptures frequently speak of these three, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But do they represent them to be *three persons?* That the Father is a person no one but a pantheist doubts. And what can be more evident than the personality of the Son? We have before seen, that the representations made of him in the Old Testament and the New, clearly show it. If Jesus Christ is not a distinct person, the four Gospels and the Epistles are fictions. The Scripture evidence of the personality of the Holy Spirit, though not so abundant as that of the personality of Christ, is yet, as we have already seen, perfectly satisfactory. So far then the article in the Catechism is conformed to the Scripture standard. It only expresses in other language what the word of God plainly teaches, that is, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *three persons.*

The Catechism moreover declares, that "these three are *one God.*" This guards against Tri-theism. Now the doctrine of the unity of God is often and emphatically affirmed in Scripture, and acknowledged by all Christians.—The Catechism further declares that the three are "the same in substance." Substance is a metaphysical term, originally introduced into the Trinitarian creed, and still employed, to confront Arianism. The meaning is, that they are of the *same nature*, truly divine, partakers of the Godhead. Again; they are "equal in power and glory." This is opposed to the doctrine, that the Son and Spirit are not only subordinate to the Father in office, or in the order of operation, but inferior in their *nature.* The article asserts, that they are equally possessed of divine perfection, and equally worthy of supreme honor. And this we have seen to be a doctrine of Scripture.

Our formula then bears the test. It is conformed to the infallible standard of Christian doctrine. It sets forth in a brief and comprehensive proposition, what is plainly taught in the word of God.

We are aware that, when we use this formula and assert that

three persons are one God, objectors will allege, that we affirm what is self-contradictory and absurd, and of course incredible. To this I repeat the reply, which has often been made and never invalidated, that it is no contradiction to say, God is three in one respect, and one in another respect. You need not to be informed how many things have a perfect unity in one point of view, which in another point of view have a plurality. And if one who deserves our cordial confidence, barely asserts, without any explanation, that a particular thing is *three* and *one*, we at once believe the truth of his assertion, feeling assured, that the Trinity and the unity belong to it in different respects, though we know not exactly what those different respects are, or *how* the two views can be clearly and satisfactorily reconciled.

But the objectors may allege, that our formula undertakes to explain *in what respect* God is three, and *in what respect* he is one — three as to *persons* and one as to *essence;* and that this pretended explanation occasions the greatest difficulty attending the subject.

Now although the current language of Scripture so clearly implies a plurality of divine persons, we are manifestly unable fully to understand the difference between *person*, and *being* or *essence*. It is easy for us to conceive, that there is a difference, but not to conceive exactly what the difference is. We cannot look into the subject and discern so clearly what the Trinity and the Unity are, and what is their relation to each other, as to be able, by our own intelligence, to make out the consistency between a Trinity of persons and Unity of essence. And thus after all there is much room left for implicit faith. But this is no reason why either the Trinity or the Unity should be denied. How many things do we hold as truths, which are in some respects utterly inscrutable, and which we know not *how* to reconcile with each other! And why should we think this strange, when we consider how small our capacity is, and how imperfect and scanty our knowledge.

But I must add, that a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity would involve a greater difficulty, than believing it. If Jesus

Christ is not a distinct person, then why have those writers who were infallibly guided by the divine Spirit, uniformly represented him to be a distinct person, just as they have represented Moses or David to be? Why have they spoken of him in such a manner, that we cannot question his personality without doing discredit to their honesty? And if he is not truly God, why have they called him God, and worshipped him as God, and ascribed to him all the characteristics of Divinity?

Say not, that you will be content with the simple language of the Bible, exclusively of all human interpretations. For there are in fact many different and opposite interpretations; and, in these circumstances, your saying that you receive the statements of the doctrine before us in the simple words of Scripture, does not make known your faith; and, if you would be honest and faithful, you must declare which of the different interpretations of Scripture you adopt. You must say whether you believe Christ to be a mere man, or a mere attribute of God, or a particular mode of divine manifestation, or a super-angelic being, or *a divine person.* You cannot, consistently with Christian integrity, take advantage of existing circumstances and conceal your real belief, by professing to receive the unexplained language of Scripture. If you do truly believe what the word of God teaches, why should you not express your belief intelligibly? And how can you do this better, than in the form which has so long been approved by the orthodox? If we should at this day go about to frame an article which should stand in manifest opposition to the various forms of error, and set forth clearly and fully what we hold to be the Scripture doctrine; I doubt whether we could frame one, which would answer our purpose better, than that already prepared for us.

But suppose we should discard all human forms, and pertinaciously adhere to the words of Scripture, exclusively of all attempts at explanation. Some Deist, who believes in one God, might come forward with objections against the representations of the New Testament, as hard to be obviated, as those which are urged against the common creed. You believe in one God, he might

say; but the Bible, which you hold to be inspired, teaches that Christ the Son of God, is also *God*, *God over all*, and the object of religious worship to his followers. Do you then worship two Gods? Here we should meet with as great difficulty, yea, with the same difficulty in defending the language of Scripture, as in defending the article of the orthodox creed. And how can it be otherwise, if, as we believe, that article expresses the true sense of Scripture? Hence we conclude that the difficulty, whatever it may be, attends *the doctrine itself*, not the particular form in which it is presented before us. What then should we gain by giving up the orthodox formula, and restricting ourselves to the exact words of Scripture? How would this either exempt us from the difficulty, or diminish its force? And how much soever we may be disposed to dwell upon the evils which may be occasioned by the use of creeds; time and experience would soon convince us, that we must have a formula which will make known clearly and in a guarded manner what we believe to be the true doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; — that *we must have a confession of faith.* If others should agree with us, we should have a common creed. So it is at length with the Congregationalists in Great Britain. They have disliked the use often made of Confessions of Faith. But as circumstances are, they have felt themselves bound in duty to make, in a series of articles, a public declaration of the opinions in which they are agreed. So that after all, they have a common creed; and this creed is a bond of union among them, and a means of securing the esteem and confidence of Christians in other countries. Without such a declaration of their faith, how could we know whether they receive what we regard as gospel truth, or whether they are corrupted with Pelagian or Socinian errors? Their merely professing to adhere to the Scriptures would not satisfy us.

It is thought by not a few, that the doctrine of the Trinity is of no practical consequence. I can hardly account for it, that so great a mistake should be made. For it follows from the very nature of the doctrine that, if cordially believed, it cannot fail to exert a most important influence upon us in respect to every

part of Christian duty. Our affections, our worship, and all our religious exercises must ordinarily be conformed to the views we entertain, and the objects we contemplate. Consider then how great the difference between the views of those who believe the common doctrine of the Trinity, and those who reject it. Trinitarians regard the Son and the Holy Spirit as distinct persons, possessed of divine perfection and worthy of the highest religious homage. The apprehensions of the anti-trinitarian are far inferior; and to these inferior apprehensions, all that is moral and religious in his exercises will of course be conformed. In his practical faith, in his prayers, and in his religious life, he must be at a great remove from Trinitarians. If *they* are right, *he* is guilty of withholding from the Saviour and Sanctifier the honor which is their due. If *he* is right, *they* are guilty of idolatry.

But it is not only from the nature of the case, but from careful observation of facts, that we learn the practical importance of the doctrine. The following remarks of Luther are as applicable to the present day, as to the time when he lived. Speaking of the connection of the whole of Christianity with the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly with the doctrine of Christ's person, he says: "I have remarked in all the histories of Christendom, that all those who have rightly held that article about Jesus Christ, have remained good and true in the right Christian faith; and though they may have erred and sinned in other things, yet they have held out to the last. For whoever stands right and firm in this, that Jesus Christ is true God and man, that he died for us and is risen, will agree to and stand by all the other articles. Thus it is most true, as St. Paul says, that Christ is the chief good, the ground, and soil, and the whole sum, — to whom and under whom all the rest is gathered together; for thus it is determined, says St. Paul, that in Jesus Christ the whole perfect divinity shall dwell bodily or personally. Hence he who does not find God *in Christ* shall never more, and nowhere, be able to find him *out of* Christ, though he go above heaven, under hell, and beyond the world; for *here will I dwell*, says God, *in this man*, born of Mary the Virgin, etc." Again, he says, "I

have also remarked, that all error, heresies, idolatry, scandals, abuses and evils in the churches, have come originally from this, that this article about faith in Jesus Christ has been despised or lost. And when one looks at them in the light, and rightly, he sees that all heresies fight against this dear article about Jesus Christ."

I cannot impress it too deeply upon your minds, that those Christians who are of a philosophical cast, and who indulge themselves in metaphysical speculations respecting the Trinity, are specially exposed to doubts and difficulties, and are the most likely in the end to err from the truth. Free inquiry is indispensable to progress in knowledge. But let it never be forgotten, that after we have become fully persuaded of the divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, our main inquiry is, what these sacred writings teach. In pursuing this inquiry, we should scrupulously guard against the influence of prejudice, against love of honor and fear of reproach, and against undue confidence in our own understanding. We should habitually keep in mind, that we need divine guidance, and should frequently, and constantly pray that the Spirit of God would illuminate our dark minds, and enable us to understand aright the glorious doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Those who are clothed with humility, and have the spirit of prayer, and are heartily engaged to do the will of God, are seldom troubled with serious doubts respecting the Trinity. Their fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, evinces to them practically the certain truth and the infinite value of the doctrine. Their own experience makes clear what would otherwise be obscure, and imparts reality to what would otherwise be dubious and shadowy. The Father of lights is present with them, and in his light they see light. They perceive that the doctrine is wrought into the whole texture of the gospel scheme, and is perfectly adapted to their case as fallen, guilty, polluted, and helpless. To them the doctrine becomes more and more practical, and more and more precious. Its unfathomable depths check their pride and self-conceit, and brings them down to their proper place. Its glories awaken their

devout adoration, love and joy. Notwithstanding the plausible arguments, the ridicule and cavils which have been arrayed against the doctrine, it is perfectly agreeable not only to their devout feelings, but to their sanctified reason. But let it be remembered, that the truth and excellence of this gospel doctrine, its connection with the plan of redemption, and the rich blessings which flow from it, can be effectually learned only by experience.

Finally. Let it be fixed in our minds, that the summary statements of the doctrine of the Trinity, which are found in Theological systems and Confessions of faith, however important they may be in other respects, are by no means to be substituted for the language of Scripture, either in the instructions and prayers of the sanctuary, or in the contemplations and devotions of Christians in private. Ministers should ordinarily teach, and believers should ordinarily converse and pray, and even think, not in the language of creeds, but in the words of inspiration.

LECTURE XXXIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES. ITS DESIRABLENESS.

Having in foregoing Lectures laid before you the doctrine of the Divine existence and the Divine perfections, particularly the doctrine of Scripture respecting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one true God; I deem it proper, in the next place, to invite your attention to the doctrine of the *Divine Purposes*.

The doctrine of God's purposes, taken by itself, is remarkably simple and plain. There is no principle of religion which is more easily understood, or which is sustained by more clear and satisfactory evidence. How then is it to be accounted for, that the doctrine is so frequently thought to be obscure, and to be not only encompassed with peculiar difficulties, but exposed to unanswerable and overwhelming objections? My answer is, that the obscurities and difficulties arise, in part at least, from the unnecessary introduction of other matters foreign to the doctrine. Or it may be more correct to say, that our difficulties arise, not from the doctrine itself, that God has a purpose, but from our attempts to determine, beyond our means of information, what his purpose is, and how he executes it. That God has purposes or designs, is obvious and intelligible. But to satisfy ourselves in all cases what his purposes are, how they are related to one another, and how they are accomplished, is a very different thing. We may indeed obtain a satisfactory knowledge even of these last points, so far as our duty requires; and our knowledge in these respects may be continually increasing. But a perfect comprehension of the whole extent of the divine purposes, and of the manner in which they are related to each other, and in which they are carried into effect, is far be-

yond the reach of our faculties. And it is evident, that our attempting to know what is unknowable, or to form a judgment on subjects which lie beyond the sphere of our intelligence, must involve us in numberless difficulties and perplexities. If we would, as far as possible, avoid these perplexities, and secure the benefits of a sound faith, we must be content to understand and believe what is clearly made known. We must first settle in our minds the plain and certain truth, that God has purposes or designs, and that his purposes are perfectly wise and good. After this, we may endeavor to learn, as far as we can, what his purposes are, always keeping in mind, that they are all perfectly wise and good, whether their wisdom or goodness is apparent to us, or not. In those cases where the wisdom or goodness of his purposes is not apparent, we are to place implicit confidence in God. We know that he unchangeably possesses infinite wisdom and goodness. And it is a just and easy inference, that if he is wise and good, his purposes must be so too. And if, through the weakness of our understanding or the disorder of our heart, we are unable to discern directly the wisdom and goodness of any parts of God's universal plan; we have still the satisfaction to know, that there is unbounded wisdom and goodness in him who contrived the plan; and from this we certainly conclude that there is perfect wisdom and goodness in every part of his plan, and that we shall see it to be so, when we obtain adequate knowledge.

Another and very fruitful source of obscurity and perplexity relative to the doctrine of the divine purposes, is that settled dislike of the doctrine, which arises from the pride and selfishness of the heart. The opposition which men sometimes feel against this doctrine is so strong and violent, as to render them incapable of being convinced by the clearest evidence. The most conclusive arguments drawn from reason and revelation, have no influence upon them. Their hearts are closed against the truth, and the light which is in them is turned into darkness. No wonder that a doctrine so holy, so sublime, and so humbling to man, should occasion perplexity and trouble to those whose inclinations are so directly opposed to it. But if we bring to the investigation of this

subject, a humble, docile, and pious disposition, and then pursue the investigation on just principles; the obscurity and perplexity which may have encompassed the subject will subside. The word and the Spirit of God will guide us into the truth.

For half a century, I have heard and read much, and thought more, on the subject now in hand. I have been acquainted with the manner in which it has been treated by its ablest advocates, and by its most strenuous opposers. And it would be no difficult task for me to lay before you in detail the common arguments for and against the Calvinistic doctrine of the divine purposes, which, in my apprehension, is the doctrine of Scripture. And this might be deemed the most expedient and useful course for me to pursue. But on this subject, and on most other subjects, I have thought another course preferable. The common arguments used by the friends and by the opposers of the doctrine, are exhibited in the various books, particularly the systems of Divinity, to which you have access. On my part, I have in the use of the means within my reach, formed a habit of thinking on the subject, and a manner of treating it, which are my own. I do not indulge the thought that, in ability or skill, my manner of thinking and reasoning is equal to that adopted by some others. But however unequal in these respects my manner may be to that of others, it is still my own. And I have supposed that if I could contribute anything to your improvement, and to the advancement of the cause of truth, I must do it by an unreserved disclosure of my own mind, — by telling you just what I think, and how I think — just what conclusions I adopt, and in what way I am led to adopt them. This is what I shall now do. I shall explain the subject to you, as I do to myself. I shall argue the case with you, as I have often argued it with myself. I shall frankly lay open the objections which have arisen in my own mind, and show you how I have obviated them. I shall describe the difficulties I have felt, and show you how I have overcome them. And I will not neglect to present before you the pleasing aspects of the subject which have occurred to my own reflections, and the peculiar comforts which the Bible doctrine seems to me adapted to impart.

In ordinary cases, I deem it expedient to use the phrase, *divine purposes*, instead of *divine decrees;* because in our version of the Scriptures, the sacred writers seldom if ever express the doctrine under consideration by the word *decree*, and because they generally use that word in another and very different sense. See 2 Chron. 30: 5. "They published a decree and made proclamation throughout all Israel — that they should come and keep the Passover at Jerusalem." The decree was an *order* or *edict* from the king and his princes, commanding a particular act, which act became the duty of those to whom the decree was published. Ezra 6: 3. "Cyrus made a decree," and the decree was an *order* or *command*, that the temple at Jerusalem should be rebuilt. In the same sense, it is used in chap. 7: 21 — Artaxerxes made a decree to his treasurers, to give such assistance to Ezra as he should require. It is said, Luke 2: 1, that "Cesar Augustus made a decree, that all the world," that is, all the people in the Roman empire, "should be taxed." It was an *edict*, a *law published*, requiring a tax. The decrees of the apostles, mentioned Acts 16: 4, were the rules they adopted, or the principles they established, to regulate the conduct of the disciples. In these and other cases, the decree had the nature of a *law*, and implied an obligation on the part of those who received it, to render obedience. But this is far from being the sense of the word, when used, as it generally is in theological discourses, to denote the purpose of God. The sacred writers, when they would set forth the doctrine we are considering, employ the words, *purpose*, *counsel*, *will*, *counsel of his will*, *choice*, *and pleasure*. And it seems to me, that by using these words, and others of similar import, we shall do something towards guarding our own minds and the minds of others against needless prejudice and mistake. Although the Assembly of Divines use the phrase, "decrees of God," to designate the doctrine referred to, they explain it by the language which I have preferred: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose." The definition given of this doctrine by orthodox divines, is somewhat various in form, but it is substantially the same. The Shorter Catechism has it in this form: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the

counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." Dr. Dwight gives it in this way: "That all things, both beings and events, exist in exact conformity with the purpose or pleasure of God." This implies the same as the language of the Shorter Catechism; although it does not affirm the purpose itself, but only that all things exist in conformity with it. It is like this; — instead of saying, an architect has formed an exact design or plan of an edifice, we say, he builds it *in conformity with his plan*. We presuppose that he has a plan, and affirm that he adheres to it, and executes it, in the erection of the edifice. But when Dr. Dwight undertakes to support his doctrine, his arguments go to prove that God has actually a purpose, determination or design, and he says, "what is commonly intended by the decrees of God, is that eternal and unchangeable *choice* or *pleasure* of the Divine mind, by which all things are brought into being."

In the discussion of this subject, I shall first endeavor to show, that the doctrine of *the divine purpose*, as already explained, is *altogether desirable*. And I should be willing to refer this matter at once to the judgment and feelings of all candid, pious men. Who among them would not regard it as desirable, that God should determine what the Universe shall be, and should have a plan extending to all beings and all events? When a man is about to build a house, is it not desirable that he should have in his mind a clear idea of what he is going to do? — that he should have an exact plan of all the parts of the building? Would you, in any case, think it best, that a man should proceed to the work of building, without any definite design, as to the size and form of the house which he is to build? And if any one should proceed in this way, would you not say, the proceeding is stamped with folly? If there is to be a UNIVERSE, the plan of it must in some way be fixed. Some one must be the contriver, and determine what it shall be. Suppose the question to arise among intelligent and holy beings in heaven and earth; who shall devise the system of the creation? To whom shall it be committed to fix the plan of the great work? No saint on earth and no angel in heaven would hesitate a moment to

make the choice, and to say with all the heart, — let the work be committed to the only wise God. Let all inferior beings stand aside, and let the King Eternal determine exactly, and in all respects, what the new creation shall be. With his unerring counsels let no one interfere. As soon as it is seen, what is the plan which he has chosen, let all unite in saying, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." — But there is no need of supposing any question to arise as to what shall be done. A universe, far beyond the comprehension of finite understandings, has been formed. Its plan has been settled. The design of it originated in the infinite mind of God, and there only. My present position is, that it is altogether desirable that it should be so. The doctrine of the divine purposes — the doctrine that God determined what should be the plan of the universe, and what should take place in it, is a doctrine which all good beings would wish to be true.

Possibly the thought may arise in your minds, that the doctrine is indeed desirable on a certain condition. Well, then, what is the condition? The condition, you may say, is obvious. It is evidently desirable that God should fix the plan of the universe, and determine what shall come to pass, *if it is certain*, that he will adopt the *best* plan — that he will determine all things *right*. This I allow, is a reasonable condition. Nor is the doctrine of the divine purposes desirable on any other principle. And unless we can be sure, that God's determination will in all respects be perfectly right, we should not think it best that the plan of the Universe should lie wholly with him. Let then the question of the desirableness of the doctrine under consideration be determined upon this just and reasonable principle.

And here I hold it to be an absolute certainty, that a Being possessed of infinite perfection, will and must judge and choose right — that a God of unlimited knowledge and goodness will contrive the system of the universe in the best manner. Such a Being is surely *competent* to lay out the plan of a universe of the greatest conceivable extent, and which is to endure forever. To determine the scheme of such a creation is an affair of astonishing magnitude. And we might be ready to ask who is sufficient for

such an undertaking? Who is qualified to take into view all that belongs to such a world, as this in which we live — a world so large, involving so many parts, and so many interests, and to continue in operation through ceaseless ages? But this world is a very small part of the whole creation. The universe consists of millions and millions of worlds vastly larger than this. Who possesses a mind that is adequate to plan such a universe, and to plan it in the best manner? Finite minds, even the most exalted, are totally incompetent to this. But the infinite God is perfectly competent. He can take into view everything pertaining to such a universe. We are sure that he will make no mistake. He knows what plan is the wisest and best, and that is the plan he chooses. The experience of past ages has shown, and the experience of future ages will more and more clearly show, the perfect excellence of the system adopted. The longer it continues in operation, the more evident will it be, that it is in all respects marked with consummate skill, and that the Being who contrived it, judged and acted right. We are sure of all this, not because we are able to take into view what belongs to the system of the universe, and to judge, by our own wisdom, what would be wisest and best; but because we know that the wisdom of God is infallible, and his goodness without limits. Our conclusion rests on the firm basis of the absolute perfection of God.

This is the way in which I show the desirableness of the doctrine of the divine purpose respecting the created universe — the purpose that was in the mind of God from everlasting.

After having taken such a view of the subject, it must appear to us very strange, that any reasonable persons should dislike the doctrine, and wish it not true, and in their words or their hearts make opposition to it. Why is it so? What is the real ground of all this prejudice and hatred? Is it because those who are hostile to the doctrine, are afraid to trust God with the concerns of his own creation, and with the business of determining the plan of it? But is not God worthy to be trusted? Is he not possessed of the requisite knowledge and judgment? Is he not benevolent? Is he not as much disposed, as could be wished, to

fix upon the best plan? Why then should any be unwilling or afraid to trust him with this concern? — Do men oppose this doctrine and show an unwillingness that God should fore-ordain whatsoever shall come to pass, because they apprehend that his purposes will occasion injustice, either to themselves or others? But what reason have they for such an apprehension? Can a God of perfect justice and righteousness and boundless benevolence, ever perform an action or have a purpose unjust towards any of his creatures? Do not his perfections place him at an infinite distance from this? Has any one of his designs — has any part of his plan been injurious to any, even the meanest of his subjects? Is it not a certainty that such a being as God will adopt a plan and pursue a course of administration, which will be perfectly just and benevolent? What ground then can any one have for the least dissatisfaction in this respect with the doctrine under consideration?

I ask again: Can those who oppose the doctrine of the divine purposes, imagine that the doctrine is or ever will be dishonorable to God? — But the very statement of the doctrine is, that it is "for his own glory" that he has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass. And does not God know what system will be for his own glory? And will he not be sure to adopt such a system and to carry it into execution? Will not a Being of infinite wisdom and infinite justice take care that his wisdom and justice shall be manifested and honored? Will not a Being of infinite benevolence take care that his benevolence shall be exercised and displayed?

What then is the real reason that men dislike and oppose the doctrine before us?

Doubtless some reject the doctrine through mistake. They think it very different from what it is. They attach to it ideas which do not belong to it, and which are contrary to truth. And in regard to such persons, I would only say, let them take care to guard against mistaken views of the doctrine, and to understand exactly what it is.

But what shall we say of those, who understand the doctrine,

and yet dislike and oppose it? What can be the ground of their opposition, but that carnal mind which is enmity against God? What but an unwillingness that God should reign and do his pleasure? — an unwillingness that he should adopt a scheme of administration, which shall contribute most to his own glory and to the welfare of his universal kingdom? Now when the ground of opposition to the doctrine lies in the enmity of the heart against God, arguments from reason and from Scripture are likely to be in vain. The opposition can be removed only by that operation of the Spirit which gives a new heart.

LECTURE XXXV.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES PROVED FROM THE WORKS, PERFECTIONS, AND WORD OF GOD.

In the previous Lecture, after giving a brief explanation of the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, I endeavored to show that it is altogether desirable. I shall now lay before you, though very summarily, the evidence which shows the doctrine to be true.

In the first place, consider the works of Creation and Providence, as they present themselves to attentive observers, without the aid of Scripture. All the instances of design which are seen in the natural and moral creation, are evidences of the existence of a design or purpose in the mind of the Creator. No reasonable man can think, that the adaptedness of one thing to another, and the fitness of means to ends, which are everywhere apparent, are the result of chance, in other words, that they exist without an intelligent, designing cause. An effect must have a cause, and a cause adequate to the production of the effect. A thing done, supposes a doer, and a doer competent and suited to the thing done. Now if you see in anything an exact correspondence with something else, or a striking adaptedness to the accomplishment of an important end, you cannot avoid the conclusion, that such correspondence or adaptedness originated in the mind of him who caused that thing to exist. It necessarily implies design or intention in the author. And as God is the author of all things which exist, all the marks of design in his works must be referred to a design existing in his own mind. He cannot act out or manifest what he has not in himself. If an architect builds a house which is exactly

adapted to various and important uses, we know it was his design to do so. This principle is so evident, that it needs only to be stated to be believed. Take a few examples. We find that light is adapted to the eye, and is the means of vision. The Creator then designed it to be so. The eye also is adapted to the light, and is the organ of vision. Of course our Creator intended it to be so. The air, the water, the motion of the heavenly bodies, all things in the natural creation, and all the laws which regulate it, are obviously adapted to the accomplishment of important ends. All this affords various and abundant evidence of the truth of our doctrine. And if we proceed to the intelligent and moral world, this evidence is still more striking. To what momentous objects is the mind of man fitted! Who can tell the number and the value of the ends to which its faculties are adapted? Our conclusion is, that God had all these ends in view when he created the mind, and that the adaptedness of its faculties to these ends was a matter of design with him. The same as to the connection of events. One of them contributes to another which is near, and to others which are distant. The discovery of America, for example, contributed to the settlement of our forefathers here, and to the whole train of events, political and moral, which have followed, and which will follow. It was then the purpose of God that the discovery of America should contribute to all these events. And if we could see all the tendencies of things, and all the events which are to flow from them, we should know the whole design of God respecting them. But as it is, we can learn this, aside from revelation, only so far as our experience and observation go.

My second argument is from the perfections of God. The argument is a priori. We consider it as an admitted truth, that there is a God, and that he is possessed of infinite perfection, natural and moral. From this it is plainly inferred, that he has a design or plan respecting his works, and that his plan is perfectly wise and good. The Supreme Being must act according to his own character. He cannot deny himself. He cannot do anything contrary to his own nature. If he is intelligent, he will exercise his intelligence; one exercise of which is to form designs. If he is good,

he will do good. If he is powerful, he will exert his power. As to the creation, — God, in the exercise of his infinite intelligence, knew what system would be marked with the highest wisdom. And as the same God who is infinitely intelligent, is infinitely good, we conclude that he not only knows what created system is best, but is disposed to adopt it. It is as certain that he will choose the system which is on the whole the best, as that he is good; the degree of this certainly being in proportion to the measure of his goodness. The power of God to carry into effect the system which he knows to be best, and which he chooses, cannot be doubted. The very idea of his omnipotence implies, that he can do whatever he wills to do. The same in regard to his justice. As God possesses this attribute, he will so contrive the system of creation, that all the subjects of his government shall receive what is equitable and right.

Now is there any flaw in this argument? Are you able to conceive, that a Being infinitely wise and benevolent and powerful, does not know what plan of operation is the best, or that he will not really prefer that plan to any other, or that he will not adopt it, and proceed according to it? Is it not clear, that if God should fail of doing this, he would fail of exercising his own perfections — would fail of manifesting his own character — in short, would fail of acting like himself? Does it not then enter into the very idea that you entertain of God, that he has a purpose in regard to his works, and that the scheme he adopts must be entirely suited to accomplish the great and good object he has in view? Can you think what God is, without expecting that the perfect goodness of the plan he has adopted, will sooner or later be made evident to you and to all intelligent beings? — The argument which I have here laid before you, is exceedingly simple and plain. As God is intelligent, he must act intelligently. As he is wise, he must act wisely. As he is benevolent, he must act benevolently. As he is just, he must do justice. As he is powerful, he must exercise his power. His purposes and proceedings must result from his own infinite mind, not from such limited, shallow, fallible minds as belong to us. And the fact that the plan of his works is so far above

us, and so different from what our wisdom would have dictated, shows him to be God, and shows us to be, what we are, creatures of yesterday, exceedingly ignorant and fallible.

My third argument is from the Scriptures.

For the present we are considering the doctrine of the divine purposes in a general view. The doctrine, as it respects the salvation of God's people, will be considered more particularly in a subsequent Lecture.

The Scriptures in different ways furnish evidence that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. Sometimes they refer to the general doctrine expressly. More frequently however they speak of God's purpose respecting particular events. But in all such cases, the general doctrine is implied. For the particular events referred to are manifestly connected with various other events to which the purpose of God must relate. And besides this, it is natural to ask, why God should determine the events spoken of, more than others of the same kind. Our conclusion must be, that the sacred writers so often represented God as determining or willing particular events, because the subject they had in view led them to speak of those particular events, and that they would in the same manner have set forth the divine purpose as to any other or all other events, had there been the same occasion to speak of them. When therefore we see that the inspired writers speak with perfec freedom and familiarity of the purpose, design, or will of God, a relating to any event which they have occasion to notice; we a once conclude, that the general doctrine of the divine purposes was previously settled in their minds, and that they declared particular events to be determined of God, not because they wished to distinguish those events from others, but merely because the subject they were treating, required those particular events, and not others, to be noticed. This is clear. But it will be more clear when we attend to a few of the passages relating to the subject.

Of the texts which directly teach the general doctrine of the divine purposes, that in Eph. 1: 11, is one of the most important. The Apostle is speaking of one of God's purposes, — his purpose to save his people; and he shows that he regards this particular

purpose of God, as connected with his purpose respecting all things else. While he is setting forth the particular design of God respecting those who are to be saved, his mind turns to the general doctrine: "In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated — according to the purpose of him who," he says, "*worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*" You see exactly how the matter lay in the mind of Paul. When he thought of the salvation of believers, he thought of it as agreeing with the gracious purpose of God, and as resulting from it. And as God saves his people, so he worketh *all things*, according to his purpose, or "after the counsel of his own will." From this and other similar passages we learn what was the habit of the Apostle's mind. He was led by his feelings to introduce the purpose of God to save his people, and to dwell upon it; and then to pass from the purpose of God respecting that particular event, to his purpose respecting *all events*. And when the same Apostle says in another place, Rom. 11: 36. "For *of* him are all things," he must have meant that all things proceeded from God according to his intention or will; so that the general doctrine of his purpose is implied. The same thing is taught in Isa. 46: 10. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." Here, as in the text above cited from Ephesians, there is a reference to the general purpose or pleasure of God, and to a particular purpose. But the order is different. The Apostle first speaks of a particular thing purposed, and then extends his thoughts to the general purpose. While the Prophet first brings into view the general truth, that God's counsel shall stand and that he will do all his pleasure; and then, in the same sentence, mentions a particular instance, that is, the calling of Cyrus to give deliverance to the Jews. In this and other places, you see in what manner the Scriptures teach the doctrine of the divine purpose, and how the subject lay in the minds of the sacred writers; how familiar it was to their thoughts, and with what perfect freedom they spoke of it, either in its general aspect, or with reference to particular cases, just as they had occasion.

The passage in Rev. 4: 11, has the same bearing upon the general doctrine. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and

honor and power; for thou hast made all things, and for *thy pleasure* they are and were created." All things were created and exist *for the pleasure of God*, that is, to answer the ends which are pleasing to him, — to accomplish the objects he chooses. That he has a purpose or design respecting all things, is implied in texts of this character.

But the doctrine is clearly implied in those passages, which do not speak of all things as objects of the divine purpose, but only of some particular thing, as the coming of Christ, the salvation of men, or some other event of providence. This is not the place to cite the particular texts relating to God's choice of his people. I shall have occasion to do this in the sequel. I shall refer here to one passage only, and that for the purpose of pointing out the bearing of such texts upon the general doctrine of the divine purposes. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, ch. 1, the Apostle teaches, that God chose the Ephesian believers before the foundation of the world, and predestinated them to the adoption of children. But why does he speak of those particular Christians? Why not say expressly, that God chose all who shall be saved in all places, and in all ages, and predestinated them to the adoption of children? I answer, because he was then addressing himself to those particular Christians, and he had at that time no immediate occasion to speak of others. But others, all others were implied. For if those particular believers who lived at Ephesus, were eternally chosen and predestinated, it is clear that all others were; — inasmuch as all who are saved, are by nature in the same ruined state, and are equally dependent for salvation on the good pleasure of God. And we see in other places, that when the sacred writers had occasion for it, they spoke of the same purpose of God as relating to all the redeemed. It would be doing violence to the subject to suppose, that some Christians were eternally predestinated to salvation, while others were not; or to suppose that some were predestinated in a different sense from others. It is indeed true, that passages like this do not *expressly* teach the election of any, except those who are particularly mentioned. They do not teach it in direct terms. But they teach it

as certainly by plain implication. And is not the same true of the divine commands? The moral law was originally promulgated to the people assembled at Mount Sinai. It was expressly addressed to those whom the Lord had brought out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. How and why was it binding on subsequent generations of Israelites? And why is it binding on us? Evidently because there is the same reason why it should be binding upon *all* human beings, as upon a part. All have the same intelligent, moral nature, and stand in the same relation to God as their Creator and moral Governor, and are so constituted as to be equally under obligation to obey a moral law. On this broad principle, all the moral precepts which were given to the Israelites at Sinai, though not the ceremonial precepts, are as binding upon us, as they were upon them. And for a similar reason, we conclude, that the language of the Apostle respecting the divine purposes, which was originally addressed to the Ephesian Christians, is really and fully applicable to all the redeemed.

But the subject requires me to proceed further. We have seen that there are various texts which teach, that God's purpose relates to the salvation of his people. But how do these prove that it relates to any events of a different kind? How especially do they prove, that it relates to all events? I answer here also, that they prove it inferentially, or by plain implication. They prove it on the principle, that other events are as really dependent on the will of God, as this. There is, besides, a vast number of events, which are manifestly connected, either nearly or remotely, with the salvation of God's people; and all events of this description are of course involved in his purpose to save them. Indeed, there is good reason to think, that the whole system of things, both in the natural and moral world, stands related to the work of redemption; and consequently, that the purpose of God respecting the whole system, is involved in his purpose respecting redemption.

The same general conclusion follows from the passages, which mention the purpose of God respecting any particular event. The Scriptures teach that God had a purpose to destroy the world

by a deluge, and Sodom by fire; to send Joseph into Egypt; to deliver the Israelites from bondage; to send Senacherib to punish the rebellious inhabitants of Judea; and to raise up Cyrus and influence him to restore the captive Jews to their own country. It is obvious to all who read the Scriptures, that God's purpose respected these and other particular events. But it cannot be thought, that the inspired writers mention these events, to show that they were predetermined by God, more than others. For, in the first place, it is manifest that the sacred writers speak freely of the purpose of God respecting *any* particular events, just as the occasion requires. Secondly, there is in the nature of things the same reason to acknowledge the divine purpose respecting other events of a similar kind, as respecting those which are specified — perfectly the same reason; while there is no more difficulty in the one case than in the other. Thirdly, the argument from the divine attributes, and from the dependence of all things on God, applies to other events, as well as to those which are mentioned. Fourthly, we are forbidden to exclude any events from the purpose of God, by those passages which speak of all things as directed and controlled by his will.

It seems then to be a fair conclusion, that the sacred writers speak of particular events as divinely predetermined, not to indicate that other events are not equally predetermined, but merely, because the subject they are handling brings those particular events into view; and that they mention the divine purpose respecting those events, as a part of a general purpose or plan including all events.

You see that the inspired writers teach the doctrine of the divine purposes in a different manner, from what is common in systematic Theology. They bring it into view *incidentally*. They assert it, as a well known truth, in relation to this or that particular event, as occasion requires. They teach it in separate parts, presenting it before us, from time to time, with reference to the particular subject in hand. And, with the exception of a few passages, which speak of the matter in general terms, we are left to make out the doctrine *synthetically*, that is, to collect or

derive it from a variety of particulars. Whereas, in a systematic treatise, we commonly lay down the doctrine at once in general terms, or in a universal proposition, and say, that God's purpose extends to all beings and events — that he foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. In this matter, Theology and natural Philosophy proceed in the same way. Philosophers notice a variety of particular facts, and from these deduce a general principle. Thus they notice particular instances in which bodies attract each other, and from these derive the general law of attraction. In all the instances which have come under their observation, they have found that the loadstone attracts iron; and hence they draw the conclusion that this is the property of the loadstone. In this way they have framed a system of physical science. And who objects to this, because the natural world does not exhibit things in a systematic or scientific form? The fact is, that man, in the exercise of his intellectual faculties, does naturally and necessarily deduce general principles from particular facts. In the visible creation around us, God does not teach philosophy in a scientific manner. He does not make books and systems of philosophy, as we do. But no one infers from this that books and systems are not necessary. God furnishes the materials, and gives man the power to form out of them a system of philosophical doctrines. The mind cannot stop at single, disconnected facts, but presses on by its own impulse, to the general truth involved in those facts, or deducible from them. This is the proper work of human reason. It has an irrepressible desire for science. It aspires after the knowledge of general truths, deducible from particular facts. It is the same in Theology. And the fact that Theology is not taught in the Bible in a regular systematic or scientific form, is no more an objection to theological systems, than the fact that books containing systems of natural Philosophy are not found ready for use in the natural creation around us, is an objection to our making or using such books.

LECTURE XXXVI.

THE DIVINE PURPOSES RELATE TO ACTIONS AND EVENTS IN THE MORAL WORLD GENERALLY, AND PARTICULARLY TO THE SALVATION OF MEN.

In the last Lecture we considered the proof of the general doctrine of the Divine Purposes from the works of creation and providence, from the divine perfections, and from different classes of texts in the Scriptures. I propose now to show, that the Divine Purposes relate to *the moral world*, as well as *the natural*. This has been implied in the arguments already laid before you. But it is important, that this part of the subject should be considered more particularly.

The moral world, that is, the world of intelligent, moral beings, is evidently of higher value than the material world, and consequently is more worthy of being regarded in the counsels of infinite wisdom. And it is unspeakably important, that the plan of it should be contrived, and its various parts and movements arranged, by an omniscient mind. The considerations which illustrate the desirableness of God's purposes, apply to this part of the subject with special force. The affairs of the moral world plainly require to be directed by one who possesses infallible wisdom. And as God and he only possesses such wisdom, it is altogether desirable, that whatever pertains to moral beings should be under his direction. If the intelligent part of the creation had not been an object of the divine counsels, and had been left to take care of itself without the interference of divine wisdom, the consequences would have been far worse, than if the whole mate-

rial system had been left without any settled order, and without the direction of the divine hand. The moral world is as really incapable of rightly guiding its own affairs, as the natural world. And the evils which would result from the want of a preconcerted plan, and an infallible divine superintendence, would be far more deplorable in the former case, than in the latter.

Take another view. It is allowed by all that the divine purpose relates to the natural world. But there is such a close and inseparable connection between the natural world and the moral, and there is such a mutual dependence and mutual influence, that the divine purpose cannot relate to the one, without relating to the other. To a great extent, the events which take place in the natural world, are either the actions of intelligent beings, or follow directly from them, as effects from a cause; so that to suppose physical events to be predetermined, and moral events not predetermined, would be to suppose the visible and intimate connection between them dissolved; for instance, it would be to suppose the voluntary motions of a man's hands and feet determined, while the acts of his mind on which those motions depend, are not determined; — and this would imply a total disruption of what we know to be inseparably joined together. And, if any one should say, that free, moral acts cannot be predetermined, I would ask him, how any event which depends upon them, can be predetermined.

But I shall not enlarge upon these general considerations, which I have intended as preparatory to a direct appeal to the Scriptures, where we find truth unmixed with error. And as the Scriptures contain a history of a part of what takes place in the moral world, we may justly expect to find a correspondence between the other parts and that.

In supporting the position from the Scriptures, that the purposes of God relate to events in the moral world, I hardly know where to begin, and I shall find it difficult to know where to end.

The representation of Scripture that God doeth all things after the counsel of his own will; that he doeth all his pleasure;

and that all things are of him, and to him, must be considered as extending to the moral world, unless it can be fairly shown from the teachings of the Bible in other places, that the moral world is excepted. But we find the fact very different from this. For the Scriptures generally teach, that the purpose of God, or the counsel of his will relates *primarily* and *preëminently* to moral beings and moral events. And a consideration of the nature of the case would lead to the same conclusion. For as the beings and events which compose the moral world are of the highest importance, it follows that God, who always views things justly, must make the moral world the object of his special regard; and that if he exercises his wisdom in devising a plan of operation respecting any object, he certainly does respecting this. In his wise and benevolent counsels he would overlook any part of the created universe, rather than the intelligent part. Any other part and all other parts would be excluded from his purposes, rather than this.

In my attempt to prove from Scripture, that God predetermines events of a moral nature, I shall adduce only a small number of particular texts. More than this would be entirely unnecessary for those who have read the Scriptures. My plan is to fix upon a few appropriate passages, and to let the argument rest on them.

I begin with the case of the enslaved Israelites in the land of Egypt. God promised that they should be delivered from bondage, and should come into the possession of the land of Canaan. The promise was often made; and doubtless it implied a purpose in the mind of God, that what was promised should be accomplished. And the purpose itself was sometimes clearly expressed.

But what was the event which God promised and determined should be accomplished? It was an event, or rather a series of events, which involved numberless beings and actions of a moral nature. For how could the children of Israel be delivered from bondage, and be brought into possession of Canaan, unless by means of their own long continued agency, in connection with the agency of the Egyptian monarch and people, and of the various nations that inhabited the countries through which they would

pass; and finally of the Canaanites themselves, who dwelt in the promised land? Sacred History shows in brief what was the agency of Moses and Aaron, and the children of Israel, and of Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and other nations, in the accomplishment of God's benevolent design. The actions and events presented before us in this portion of sacred history, were of a moral nature as really as any which ever took place.

Should any one suppose, that the purpose of God might relate generally to the *fact* of the people's deliverance from bondage, without having any particular respect to the moral feelings and actions of those who were concerned; all that would be necessary to prove the falsity of such a supposition, would be to examine the history itself. Unquestionably Moses relates simple truth, when he informs us, that the design of God did respect the perverse and wicked conduct of the king and people of Egypt. God declared at the first, and declared repeatedly afterwards, what his purpose was in regard to Pharaoh. He said, Exod. 4: 21. "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he will not let the people go." And he showed what important end he meant to accomplish by hardening Pharaoh's heart. Exod. 7: 3, 4. "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; — that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth my people out of the land of Egypt *by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord.*" Again, ch. 14. "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he shall follow after them," that is, the Israelites, "and *I will be honored* upon Pharaoh and upon all his hosts." And God makes known his object more plainly still, ch. 9: 16. He says: "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for *to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.*" It is impossible that any language should be used, which would show more clearly the truth of my present position, that the purpose of God has respect to moral beings and moral actions, even those which are preëminently sinful.

Take another case. It was the declared purpose of God to send the rebellious children of Israel into Assyria, and keep them in

captivity seventy years. But this captivity was to be effected by means of the moral actions of great multitudes, and most of them sinful actions, as in the case above mentioned. God also purposed the return of the Jews from the captivity; and he purposed to bring it about by the agency of moral beings and actions, some good, and some bad.

I shall mention another case, and that the most important and most remarkable of all, namely, *the death of Christ*. From various parts of the Old Testament it is evident, that God appointed that event as the means of salvation to sinners. And we are taught in the New Testament, that those who were active in condemning and crucifying Christ, did "what the hand and counsel of God before determined to be done." Now what a series of actions, in the highest degree criminal, were concerned in bringing about that event! Behold the conduct of Judas! Behold the conduct of the Jewish and Roman rulers, and of the multitude who demanded the death of Jesus! Was there ever conduct more unjust and cruel and base? Yet the Apostle Peter, who had been in the school of Christ from the first, openly declares, and declares in a solemn address to God himself, that it was what he had before determined to be done.

In these and many other instances recorded in the Scriptures, the purpose of God related chiefly to actions which were morally evil. I have presented this point in the foreground, because it is in regard to this that the greatest difficulty is supposed to exist. But my object now is not to obviate difficulties, but to state facts; and by these facts to establish a doctrine. The facts are plain and certain; and they fully sustain the doctrine.

In numerous instances, the Scriptures bring into view the purpose of God respecting things which are *morally good*. By the Prophet Ezekiel, God made known his purpose to give the people of Israel a new heart, and to cause them to walk in his statutes. The promise of God, that the gospel shall be published to all nations, and that the world shall be filled with his glory, implies a corresponding purpose, relating to innumerable actions and events of great moral worth. And if the divine purpose relates to these ac-

tions and events, why not to all others of the same nature? There is no more difficulty respecting the whole, than respecting a part.

Having shown generally that the purpose of God relates to beings, actions and events in the moral world, I shall now endeavor to prove that it relates particularly to the salvation of his people.

It is in relation to this subject, that the inspired writers speak most particularly of the purpose of God, as we should naturally suppose they would, considering that it is a subject in which the divine glory and the welfare of the world are so much concerned. If God has a purpose respecting any object, we must believe that he has respecting the salvation of men. If any are saved, it must evidently be owing to the gracious determination of God, or to what the Scriptures call *the counsel of his will.* For the human race are depraved and ruined. They are by nature enemies to God, and are wholly disinclined to obey his law, or to accept his proffered mercy. Such is their character and state, that it is contrary to reason, and to all the facts in the case, to suppose, that their salvation can originate in themselves. If then it is to take place, it must originate in the mind of God. Just so far as God determines to accomplish it, it will be accomplished, and no further. To suppose that the salvation of sinners can result from any other cause, than the will of God, is to suppose that sinners are not what the Bible declares them to be. In regard to those who are saved, the connection between the natural state of men and the doctrine of election can be established by evidence as clear, as mathematical demonstration. If mankind are by nature entirely lost, the salvation of any part of them must depend on God. This dependence of their salvation on God, and his purpose respecting it, are plainly taught in the Scriptures.

The word of God teaches that he has chosen from the human family some particular persons, as the objects of his saving mercy. This is the very idea of election, a word which the sacred writers familiarly employ. It implies, that from a number of persons, some are taken, and others left. If the whole number were taken, the word could not be applied. There would be no election. Now what but such an election can be meant in those pas-

sages, which speak of certain persons as chosen in the Lord, Rom. 16: 13 — chosen to salvation, 2 Thess. 2: 13 — predestinated to the adoption of children, Eph. 1: 5 — predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, Rom. 8: 29 — vessels of mercy whom he had before prepared unto glory, Rom. 9: 23 — given to Christ and given out of the world, John 17: 6—9, also 6: 37, 39.

It is the opinion of Arminians and Unitarians, that the only election intended in these and other like passages is an election of nations or societies to special external privileges; that as the whole Israelitish nation was formerly chosen to the enjoyment of peculiar privileges; so under the new dispensation, Gentile nations are, in the same way, chosen to the enjoyment of gospel privileges; — in short, that the election taught in the New Testament is not *personal*, but *national*, and not to actual salvation, but to religious privileges.

A careful examination of the passages which relate to the subject, will show, that this opinion cannot be sustained; on the contrary that the New Testament sets forth an election of *individual persons*, in distinction from others, to the actual enjoyment, not merely of external privileges, but of all the blessings of spiritual and eternal life. Take the two passages referred to in John 6th and 17th. In the first of these Christ is speaking of thos who reject him, and those who receive him; of those who come t him, in distinction from those who turn away from him. He hac preached the gospel to them all, but all had not believed. V. 35, he says: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He evidently speaks of true gospel faith, and the salvation which follows. He says, v. 36: "But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me, and believe not." Then in v. 37, he says: "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Here we are taught that there is an unfailing connection between the Father's giving men to Christ, and their coming to him, or believing on him; and between their believing, and their being graciously received by him. The

same persons that are given to Christ, come to him; and the same that come to him, are not cast out, that is, are admitted into his kingdom. If coming to Christ so as to be saved is a personal thing, if it relates to individuals; then being given to Christ by the Father is a personal thing, and relates to individuals. This view is confirmed by v. 39. "This is the Father's will that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing." The Father's will related to the individual persons who were given to Christ and who were all to be saved.

The obvious sense of Acts 13: 48 corresponds with John 6: 37. Christ says: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." And in Acts: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed;" which is the same as saying, as many as were given him did come to him. No language could more clearly designate particular persons in distinction from others. So likewise what the Apostle says, Rom. 8: 30, relates altogether to individuals. If those who are *justified* and *glorified* are individual persons, those who are *predestinated* are so. To give the passage a national sense would be inadmissible, unless whole nations are not only called, but conformed to the image of Christ, and justified, and glorified. And who can suppose that being conformed to the image of Christ, and being justified and glorified, signifies no more than the enjoyment of outward privileges?

Proceed now to Eph. 1. Here you find the Apostle addressing himself not to the citizens of Ephesus, but to *the saints* at Ephesus, and to *the faithful in Christ Jesus*. These were the chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. They are all individual persons, individual saints. And the blessings which are spoken of as belonging to them are not merely the outward privileges of the gospel dispensation, but the spiritual blessings which constitute salvation, such as being holy, forgiveness of sin and adoption as children.

It is readily admitted that some of the texts in the Epistles which speak of predestination and election, may, as Whately thinks, be so interpreted, as to signify merely the purpose of God that other nations, besides the Jews, should enjoy the benefits of

the gospel dispensation. But it is clear, that the particular passages referred to, and others which might be cited, cannot with any appearance of justice be interpreted in this way. It is surely unjust to conclude, that because a word appears to have a particular sense and application in some places, it must have the same in all other places. Any man, who carefully, and without prejudice, reads the eighth and ninth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, must, I should think, be sensible, that the Calvinistic interpretation is altogether the most natural and obvious, and that the Arminian and Unitarian construction is far from doing justice to the mind of the Apostle. And it appears to me evident, that this construction is adopted by Arminians and Unitarians, not because it naturally falls in with the language of the Apostle, or results from it, but because it agrees with their preconceived opinion, and because the other construction is, in their view, attended with peculiar speculative difficulties, — a principle of interpretation, which would lead to the rejection of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

Whately, with great candor and great plausibility of argument, labors to prove, not that the Calvinistic doctrine of election is false, but that it cannot be clearly sustained from the writings of Paul. And to accomplish this object, his chief effort is the same with that of Whitby and John Taylor, namely, to prove that the election or predestination, so often brought into view by the Apostle, relates either to the appointment of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of equal privileges with the Jews, or to the appointment and choice of persons who repent and believe, to that final salvation which is consequent upon repentance and faith. This is the conditional election which Arminians hold to, that is, the election of those to final salvation who will obey the gospel; or God's predetermination to save those who will repent and obey. Now in regard to some of the texts above quoted, I admit this to be a fair construction. But how can it be admitted in regard to those which speak of *the appointment* of persons to *that very repentance and faith*, which are the *conditions* of final salvation? Persons may be elected to final salvation, that is, to the enjoyment of

heavenly blessedness, on condition of their faith and persevering holiness. And this, for aught I see, may properly enough be called a *conditional election*. But what if they are also *elected* or *predestinated* to *faith* and *holiness?* What if their *actual compliance with the conditions* is predetermined? There are not a few texts which clearly show this to be the case. Paul and other inspired writers teach, that it was the purpose of God before the world was, that certain individuals should, not only hear the call to repentance and faith, but should *actually repent* and *believe*. Their *repentance* and *faith* were fore-ordained. In other words, it was the eternal purpose of God, to *give* them repentance and faith. I shall enlarge upon this point in another place. It is sufficient for my present purpose to say, that if God actually gives repentance and faith to particular persons, in distinction from others, he doubtless determined to do it. If he actually gives a new heart to some, and not to others, it was his previous purpose to do so. That God does thus give to some, in distinction from others, a new heart and a new spirit, effectually turning them from sin, and inclining them to obey, is a truth which the Scriptures often teach, and which devout Christians thankfully acknowledge.

That the purpose of God, whatever it may be, and to whatever it may relate, especially his purpose to save sinners, is eternal and unchangeable, is so manifest, that I can hardly deem it necessary to offer any proof. As God from eternity had a perfect knowledge of all things which have been, or are, or ever will be, he must have had eternally the same reasons for his purposes, that he ever could have. And it would be very strange to suppose, that God, at any time, or in any circumstances, forms a *new* purpose, a purpose which never entered his mind before; when all the reasons which he now has for it, were always present to his view. If the infinite wisdom and goodness of God lead him now to purpose anything, they must have led him to purpose the same eternally. And to suppose his purposes in any respects to change, is to suppose a change in his attributes, and in the views of his mind. Scripture and reason unite in teaching, that the purposes of God are both eternal and immutable.

LECTURE XXXVII.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD RESPECT THINGS AS THEY ARE.

I HAVE already explained the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, and proved that it is desirable and true, and that it relates to the moral world, as well as the natural.

My next object is to illustrate the position, that *the purposes of God respect things as they are.* In other words, God eternally designed to do just what he actually does, and to do it in the manner in which he actually does it. He eternally designed that all which goes to constitute the system of the created universe, should be *as it really is.* Or as Dr. Dwight expresses it: "All things, both beings and events, exist in exact accordance with the purpose or pleasure of God." This idea is implied in the Assembly's Shorter Catechism: "God *executeth* his decrees in the works of creation and providence." The work of God in creation and providence corresponds with his eternal purpose, being the perfect execution of it. The one answers to the other, not partly, but entirely. So far as we know what God's purposes are, we know what will take place. And so far as we know what does, or what will take place, we know what God purposed. The idea, thus variously expressed, is perfectly simple and obvious, and seems hardly to need any illustration. And yet it is, in my view so important, and so adapted to relieve the mind of various misconceptions and difficulties, that I shall take pains to awaken a clear and full apprehension of it, and to fix it in your minds as one of those evident and certain truths, of which you may avail yourselves, whenever you have occasion for it. The single point

which I am to illustrate is this: *That which God actually does, is just that which he designed to do.* That which exists, is what God purposed should exist. And the manner in which God does anything, and the manner in which anything takes place, is the very manner which God designed. For example. This world exists. And God intended that it should exist, and that it should exist just as it does exist. God did actually create the world. And he purposed to create it. He created the sun, moon, and stars; and from this we know that he eternally purposed to create them. The sun and planets, composing the solar system, have each a particular nature, form, and magnitude, and they stand in a particular relation to one another, and have an influence upon one another. All this is what God intended should be. It was eternally his purpose, that the system should exist, and that the nature, form, magnitude, mutual relations and mutual influence of all its parts should be as they are. Material things act upon each other in the way of attraction, and they do it so uniformly, that attraction is called a law. And this is what God designed. There are eclipses of the sun and moon, resulting from the laws which govern their motions. And these eclipses answer to the purpose, which was eternally in the mind of God respecting them.

There is also an intelligent and moral world. And this God intended should be. He actually created moral beings, and placed them in certain circumstances; and this is what he purposed to do. All that he has actually done in regard to the bodily and mental constitution of man, corresponds with his previous design. Ascertain under what law man was originally placed, what was his condition as a moral, accountable being, what was his relation to God, what powers he possessed, and what was the mode of his agency; and you ascertain what the divine purpose was in all these respects. Man has a real, though a dependent existence. He is a real agent. He is rational, free, and moral. He does himself act. Dependent as he is on God, he *really acts;* and his actions are truly his own. All this is what God eternally designed. God has actually placed man under a moral law, re-

quiring universal holiness, and forbidding all sin. Such a law God actually purposed to give to man. He actually displays his justice in the punishment of transgressors; and this is what he before determined to do. He actually gave to the original parents of the human race such an intelligent and moral nature, and placed them in such circumstances, that they were under perfect obligation to obey his commands. And this was what he before intended. He now gives to men such an intelligent and moral nature, and places them in such a condition, that they are truly and completely under obligation to obey his law. And this is according to his purpose. In preserving and governing his intelligent creatures, and in controlling their actions, God exercises his power over them in such a manner, that their moral, accountable agency is effectually guarded against infringement, and they act with all the freedom which belongs to the proper subjects of the divine law. This is what he actually does, and what he eternally designed to do. He makes men moral agents, and continues them such, whatever their character or circumstances, suffering nothing to interfere with their own responsible agency; and all this he before determined to do.

These examples are sufficient. But I must extend this illustration to another point. God not only purposed to do what he actually does, but he purposed to do it *for the same reason, for which he actually does it.* His purpose rests on the same grounds with his actual administration. As he is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness, he always does what he does, for important reasons, or with a view to important ends; and he eternally purposed to do it for the same reasons, or with a view to the same ends. I will give a few examples. God actually made the world to manifest his own glory, and to produce a great amount of good. And it was for the same important ends, that he determined to create the world. God destroyed the world by a deluge, on account of the wickedness of men. Their wickedness was the reason why he sent such a terrible judgment. And it was for this same reason, that is, for their foreseen wickedness, that he eternally determined to send that judgment. He destroyed Sodom because of the extreme de-

pravity of its inhabitants; and with a view to the same depravity, he before determined to destroy that city. He raised up Pharaoh for a particular purpose, and he informed Pharaoh what that purpose was. And in the history of that monarch, we see that God actually accomplished this purpose. And this is the purpose which he eternally intended to accomplish, by means of that proud and wicked man. Once more. At the judgment day, God will doom a part of the human race to endless destruction, and he will do it for a sufficient reason, that is, on account of their sins. And for this same reason, he before determined to do it. He appointed them to destruction, as a just punishment for their sins.

This principle holds universally. Whatever is the reason of God's actual conduct in any case, that was the reason why he eternally purposed that conduct. In all cases he has a reason for what he does; and in all cases he had a reason, and the same reason, for determining to do it. If we learn from the word or providence of God, why he does anything; we learn why he purposed to do it. And whether we can ascertain what is the *particular* reason of the divine conduct or not, we know that he always has a good and sufficient reason for what he does; and he had the same reason for his eternal purpose. Hence his eternal purpose is as just and good, as his acts.

To illustrate still more fully the subject before us, I remark, that the divine purpose respects things *in their proper order;* that is, in the order in which they actually take place. This order is often, not to say always, of great moment. In many cases, the justice and propriety of a divine act depends upon the place it occupies in the series of events. Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise. As their expulsion took place *after* their transgression, it was manifestly just and proper. But what justice or propriety would there have been in it, had it taken place *before* they transgressed? The destruction of the wicked in the future world will, in the order of events, come after their disobedience. Punishment, in all cases *follows transgression.* And in that order, and in that only, it is just. Now the divine purpose regards punishment *in that same order.* In other words, God appointed *punish-*

ment to *follow transgression.* He determined to punish sinners, and to punish them as a consequence of sin actually committed. And his purpose to inflict punishment in this order, is as evidently just, as the actual infliction. In all such cases, the purpose of God is really *conditional.* That is, He determines to do a particular thing *on condition* that something else is done. His determination respects the one as that which is to follow the other, and is to take place on account of the other. He certainly would not make the appointment in any other way.

Rewards are to be viewed in the same light. They do in fact *follow* some act of obedience, or some service done; and in this way they are regarded in the divine purpose. Eternal life is promised, and will be given, to those who repent, and believe, and persevere in obedience. It is a reward, and will be granted, to those who comply with the terms proposed; and, in a sense, *because* they comply. And the purpose of God respects it thus. He determines to give eternal life in heaven, to those who comply with the condition. His purpose is *definite*, and relates to those very persons who will comply with the condition, inasmuch as he certainly knows who the persons are who will comply. In this sense, the doctrine of a conditional divine purpose, or conditional predestination, appears to be in accordance with the word of God. He predestinates those to final salvation, or determines to receive those to heaven, who will comply with the condition proposed in the gospel. And knowing, as he does beforehand, the persons who will comply, his purpose is to save those very persons, according to the often repeated promise, "He that believeth shall be saved." And as he will in fact save no others, he determined to save no others. I speak now of final salvation, or the enjoyment of endless happiness in heaven. You will keep in mind, that this conditional election — this choice of persons to eternal salvation on the condition of their repentance and faith, does not imply any uncertainty in the divine mind in regard to the individuals who will be saved. If God certainly knows who will fulfil the condition on which he offers eternal life, his determination to save them is certain. And it is immutable too. For how can there be any change in the purpose of an

omniscient mind? If God infallibly knows who will, through his grace, become fit subjects of final salvation, in other words, who will be prepared for heaven; and if he determines to receive to heaven all such; then his determination must be *certain* and *immutable*. What uncertainty or change can there be in a purpose, which is founded in omniscience? With these safeguards against misapprehension, in connection with other remarks still to be made, I freely admit, that the purpose of God to bestow the blessedness of heaven on his people may be called *conditional;* although Arminians, who are fond of this language, mean something very different.

I have said, that the purpose of God regards things in their proper order — the order in which they actually take place. If one thing actually precedes another, and is the ground, reason, or condition of the other; that which follows is divinely appointed in that same order, and on that same ground. And as the last event takes place on *the condition* that the other takes place, the purpose of God in fixing the last event may be called *a conditional* purpose, that is, a purpose that a certain thing shall take place on the condition of something else preceding.* But how is it in regard to the fulfilment of the condition? Is that an object of the divine purpose? Particularly how is it in regard to that repentance, faith and obedience, which are required of us in order to eternal life, or as a condition of final salvation? From two classes of texts, it is evident that *this very condition is predetermined,* — that it is the purpose of God so to influence the elect, that

* Dr. Dick, who was a distinguished Calvinist, says: "It is granted that some of the decrees of God are conditional, in this sense, that something is supposed to go before the event which is the object of the decree, and that this order being established, the one will not take place without the other. He decreed, for example, to save Paul and the companions of his voyage to Italy. But he decreed to save them only on condition that the sailors should remain in the ship. He has decreed to save many from the wrath to come, but he has decreed to save them only if they believe in Christ, and turn to him from the error of their ways. These decrees — state the order in which the events should be accomplished; — they establish a connection between the means and the end." — Lectures on Theol., Vol. I. page 256. Phila. Ed.

they will certainly repent and obey the gospel, and thus obtain eternal life. The first class of texts represent it as the purpose of God, that his chosen people shall be holy. Eph. 1: 4. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, *that we should be holy.*" 2 Thess. 2: 13. "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *though sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*" The second class are more specific, and represent regeneration, repentance, faith, and obedience, as the effect of divine operation. Christ is exalted to give repentance. God gives a new heart. He gives a heart to know him, and keep his commandments. Faith is the gift of God. He works in us both to will and to do. Now as God does actually work in sinners repentance, and faith, and all the branches of holiness, he certainly determined to do it. As it is he that takes away the heart of stone and gives a heart of flesh, we know that it was his previous purpose so to do. As he does according to the Scriptures, move or excite his people to everything which is spoken of as a condition of their forgiveness and final salvation; it is clear that he determined thus to excite and move them. All who repent and believe, do it under the effectual influence of the Holy Spirit. The beginning of holiness comes from God. He kindles the first emotion of love and desire. If we repent, or are inclined to repent; if we believe, or have a heart to believe; if we truly pray, or are disposed to pray; it is all of God. And it cannot be doubted, that God determined what his own agency in this respect should be, and to whom he would give a heart to repent and believe and pray.

But here we meet the question which divides Arminians and Calvinists. The question is whether God gives his sanctifying Spirit *in the first instance*, on the *ground* or *condition* of any thing previously done by the sinner; whether he promises and actually bestows the first renovating and saving influence, on account of any condition antecedently performed by the unrenewed; whether he regenerates them on account of anything they do while unregenerate, as an appointed *condition* of regeneration.

This question must, I think, be decided in the negative, for the following reasons.

First. The Bible teaches that everything of a moral nature in the unrenewed, is opposite to the requirements of God's law, and consequently offensive in his sight. And it would be most unreasonable to suppose, that he bestows so precious a gift as regeneration, on account of anything which is an object of his disapprobation, as whatever comes from the carnal mind is. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. And surely God did not eternally purpose to begin the work of salvation in them, on the condition of what they themselves should do, while continuing in a state of enmity and rebellion against him.

This question, you perceive, turns upon the previous question of man's natural state. If unrenewed sinners are what the Bible represents; his purpose to renew them cannot be conditioned on any good choice, disposition, or act of theirs previous to their renewal.

But secondly; the Scriptures in this case expressly exclude everything on the part of unrenewed sinners, as a condition of God's saving mercy. 2 Tim. 1: 9. "Who hath saved us and called us, *not according to our works*, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given in us in Christ before the world began." Here we are taught, that God's eternal purpose to call sinners, to deliver them from the dominion of sin, and begin their sanctification, had no respect to their works, or to anything done by them, as a condition of his saving mercy. In Rom. 11: 5, 6, God's election of his people is declared to be "*of grace;*" and a clear distinction is made between salvation by grace, and salvation by works, the one being *exclusive* of the other. And in Rom. 9th, he says what is still more decisive. He traces the exercise of God's mercy to *his own will*, in contradistinction to any condition performed by sinners. "He hath mercy on whom he *will* have mercy." And referring, as an illustration of the purpose of election, to the case of Jacob and Esau, he says: "The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of

works, but of him that calleth." The Apostle ascribes the difference made among men, to the will of God. He resolves it all into God's sovereignty, — a sovereignty which the Apostle takes pains to teach us does not respect any works or worthiness on our part as its ground or condition. Take notice however, that the point which the Apostle labors to establish, is not that the exercise of God's mercy or his purpose to exercise it towards some in distinction from others, is without any just reason or motive; but only that it is not on account of anything good in those who are chosen. He entirely excludes everything in them as a reason for the distinction; thus taking away from those who are saved all matter of glorying in themselves, and showing them, that they must ascribe the whole of their salvation to the grace of God. He does not deny that there was a reason in the mind of God for what he did. The very fact that he ascribes it to the *will* of God, evidently implies, that there is a good reason for it, inasmuch as the will of God acts according to infallible wisdom, — a wisdom however whose depths are unfathomable to us.

But if it should appear, that the instruction, the example and the prayers of pious parents, ministers, or others, are in an important sense conditions of God's saving mercy to sinners in the first instance, — that they are circumstances connected, by his appointment, with the beginning of his sanctifying influence in the hearts of sinners; this would not in any way contradict our doctrine, inasmuch as it would still be the effectual grace of God which secures the performance of all such conditions by parents, ministers, or others, and all other circumstances conducive to the salvation of sinners. And *if it were the case*, that sinners themselves actually do something, in one way or another, which proves to be a condition or means of their first conversion; this too might consist with our doctrine, as it could never be accounted for, that particular sinners and they only should perform that first, that earliest condition, whatever it might be, of God's special favor, except by the influence of God's providence and grace imparted to them, in distinction from others. It is God that maketh them to differ whenever the difference begins, and in whatever it consists. Salvation

itself, and all the steps that lead to it, are of God. It is he that works in sinners all spiritual good, all tendencies to good, and all preparations for good. And he does it according to his eternal purpose.

Thus the doctrine of personal election stands fast; the doctrine held by the Reformers, and by our Puritan forefathers, *that God did eternally and unchangeably purpose to save a portion of our race in distinction from others*, — this doctrine stands fast, whatever conditions may be required on the part of the persons chosen, — seeing it is the purpose of God to secure a compliance with the conditions themselves, as well as to bestow the blessings of eternal life. He fixes the whole series of circumstances and events, and all the means and conditions, connected with the final salvation of his chosen people. He determines what *he* will do, and what he will influence *them* to do in order to their eternal life. And he is certainly able, by his providence and his Spirit, effectually to influence them, as rational, moral beings, to do whatever is necessary to their salvation.

I shall close this Lecture with an obvious inference from the positions which I have endeavored to maintain. I began with the position, that the purpose of God respects things as they are; that he determined to do what he actually does; that the system of his works, taken as a whole, answers to the plan which was eternally in his mind; that as far as we know the one, we know the other. I have shown also, that there is, in every case, the same reason for the divine purpose, as for the divine conduct. And finally, I have shown, that the purpose of God respects things in the *order* in which they actually take place. If one thing in fact comes as the stated antecedent, condition, or ground of another, it was so determined in the divine mind. He not only determined the things themselves, but their order, their relations, and their influences, — this order, these relations and influences being as essential to the divine system, as the things themselves.

The plain inference from all this is, that if God's actual conduct is right, his eternal purpose is right. If there is no fault in what God does, there is none in his previous determination to do it.

Now as it is admitted and held by all Christians, that God's actual administration is wise and good, they must, if consistent, hold that his eternal purpose is wise and good. There can be no objection to the divine purpose or decree, which does not lie equally against the divine conduct. If you find fault with God's purpose, you find fault with his administration. If you justify his administration, you justify his purpose. The doctrine of God's eternal, unchangeable purpose to renew and save a part of the human race, in distinction from others who are in the same condition, is often thought to be objectionable. To obviate this difficulty, look at existing facts in regard to the actual condition and salvation of sinners. Take the case of Paul and the other apostles, and the case of those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, and the case of the converted Corinthians and Ephesians. Take the case of conversions in later times in our own land, and in other lands. Look directly at all the facts. See what God does in renewing and saving sinners, and *how* he does it. Do you find anything objectionable? Did God act inconsistently with his perfections, or injuriously to any of his creatures, when he converted and saved Saul of Tarsus, and the other apostles, or when he converted the depraved Corinthians and Ephesians? Has he done anything to which you can object in the conversion of sinners in India, or in the Sandwich Islands, or in our own country? Is there anything wrong in what he has done, or in the manner of doing it? Is there anything which is exceptionable, in what he has done in converting and saving you, whom I now address? If God's actual conduct towards you, or towards others, is really exceptionable; then certainly his corresponding purpose is exceptionable. Nothing is more evident than that a deliberate purpose to do what is wrong, is also wrong. But if you are satisfied that the thing done is right, you must be satisfied that the corresponding divine purpose is right. If the thing done shows wisdom and grace, the corresponding purpose shows the same. If God's work in saving those whom he does save, ought to excite our gratitude and praise; his *purpose* to save them ought to excite the same. And if it is impiety and rebellion against God to find fault with what he actually does in saving sinners,

or with any of his works in creation, providence or redemption; then it is impiety and rebellion to find fault with his eternal purpose to save, or with any of his purposes respecting creation, providence, or redemption.

LECTURE XXXVIII.

THE PURPOSE OR DECREE OF GOD AS TO THE REPROBATION OF SINNERS; AND THE CONNECTION OF PURPOSE WITH FOREKNOWLEDGE.

I HAVE already illustrated the positions, that God's eternal purpose in every case perfectly corresponds with the facts which occur in the creation and government of the world; that he determines things in the order in which they take place, and in all their relations and influences; and that his eternal purpose proceeds on the same grounds as his actual conduct, so that if his conduct is right, his purpose is right too; — if his conduct is marked with wisdom and benevolence, so is his purpose respecting that conduct.

This is all so plain, that you may doubt whether it needs the particular elucidation which I have given it. But it is generally true, that what is very plain and unquestionable on such a subject, is specially important, and deserves the most particular consideration. And it will be found that, by withdrawing our attention from what is obscure or difficult, and dwelling in our contemplations upon what is plain and certain, we shall most effectually rid our minds of perplexities, and clear up to our satisfaction the theory of divine truth. If you look steadfastly at an object invested with a clear light, that illuminated object will impress its own image upon you. But if you continually gaze at an object which is involved in obscurity, you will have that very obscurity spread over your own vision. This is a matter of special importance in the direction of your studies, and in the formation of your intellectual habits. If you ruminate chiefly upon the dark things in Theology, your mind will be dark. The soul is enlight-

ened and quickened, not by doubts and difficulties, but by plain, scriptural truth.

In treating the particular subject now to be introduced, I shall endeavor to keep these remarks before me, and to act in conformity with them.

What has been called the purpose or decree of *reprobation*, is the counterpart of election. This, I apprehend, is among those things in Paul's Epistles to which Peter alludes, and which he says are hard to be understood. Contemplated in some points of view, the subject presents difficulties not to be solved, and depths not to be fathomed. But in other points of view, we find what is plain and certain, and of great practical importance. The doctrine rightly understood, and cordially believed, is suited to check our self-complacency and presumption, to subdue the loftiness and to tame the wildness of our hearts, and to make us fear and tremble before the King eternal, the Sovereign of the universe.

What then can be said in regard to this subject? What is evidently and certainly true? We can find an answer to this on the principle which I have before stated, and which no one can doubt, that God eternally determined to do what he actually does, — that his purpose and administration perfectly correspond with each other.

We inquire then, what is the divine administration respecting the subject before us? What is the fact? Begin here. Now the fact is, that God does not save all the human race. It was then his purpose not to save all. There is a part of the world that God will banish from his presence, and punish forever. Of course he determined to banish that same part, and punish them forever. At the judgment day he will doom individual sinners to perdition, and he determined thus to doom them. You cannot believe the endless punishment of any sinners, without believing it was and is the purpose of God to inflict that punishment upon them. But God does not punish without a reason. What then is the reason? Conscience answers, and the word of God answers, that men will be punished *for their sins*. God then determined to punish them for their sins, his determination and act having the

same reason, and so being equally just and right. For clearly if it is just and right for God to punish men for their sins, it was just and right for him to determine to do this. — If, while God actually punishes men for their sins, and for that reason only, he *determined* to punish them for another and a different reason, there would be a great and distressing difficulty; and though we might see the justice of the actual punishment, we should be unable to see the justice of the previous purpose to punish. But if the purpose to punish rests upon the same ground with the actual punishment, and if the actual punishment is just and right, so is the purpose.

I have thus far spoken of the purpose of God respecting the final punishment of all who live and die in sin. Let us now take another view of the subject, — keeping hold of the same general principle to regulate our reasoning, and feeling after what is clearly and certainly true.

Now it is plainly a matter of fact, and is acknowledged to be so by all with whom I am now concerned, that while God in his great mercy renews a part of mankind by his Spirit, he does not renew them all. He leaves a part in their natural, unregenerate state. Certainly then it was his purpose not to renew the whole race, but to leave a part in their natural state. There are individuals — no one can tell how many — whom God does not call with a holy calling, — to whom he does not give a new heart. Accordingly his eternal purpose in regard to the same individuals was, not to call them with a holy calling, and not to give them a new heart.

Some respectable writers, and the late excellent George Payne of England among them, have thought, that God in this matter had no purpose at all. But is not this inconceivable? It is said, that not saving is a mere negative, and that there is no occasion for any divine purpose in regard to it. But *not doing a thing* must be a matter of design with every intelligent being in regard to any important concern, especially where there are urgent reasons in favor of doing it. In the present case, we cannot avoid the idea, that a God of infinite knowledge must have

thought of the multitude of immortal souls perishing in sin, and that a God of infinite benevolence must have desired their salvation, in itself considered, as the Apostle says, that "he would that all men should be saved," — and must have determined to save them, had there not been decisive reasons in his own mind, why he should not actually save them. The particular reasons, which are concealed from us, and which may be of such a nature as not to be within the reach of finite intelligence, must have been of great weight in God's view; otherwise he would have determined to exert his omnipotence, to which nothing is impossible, and his infinite love, which delights in communicating happiness, in applying the blessings of the all sufficient atonement to the whole family of man. It cannot be that the mind of God was indifferent in regard to a subject of this nature — that he overlooked any of the reasons for saving, or any of those for not saving; or that he could regard the case of so large a part of the human race without any intention one way or the other. *Not saving* was a matter of vast concernment; and it must have occupied the thoughts of the divine mind, and called forth a purpose corresponding with his own all comprehending, infallible wisdom. God must have determined to save, or not to save, when the alternative so deeply concerned the honor of his perfections, and the interests of his moral empire. In a case so momentous as this, who does not see, that God's *not* determining *to do* a thing, implies his determining *not to do it?* In cases so insignificant as to be below God's notice, if such cases could be, his not determining to act might not imply that he determined not to act. If he did not so much as think of the matter — if it never occurred to his mind, — then plainly he could not have any purpose concerning it. But the salvation or the perdition of millions of immortal beings is a matter not to be thus overlooked.

The supposition that God in this case has no purpose at all, is resorted to merely for the sake of avoiding a difficulty. But it not only fails of doing what is aimed at, but is, as we have seen, open to objections from another quarter, which are truly appalling. And besides all this, the difficulty, so far as it is capable of being

satisfactorily solved, may be solved in another way. And if it is left unsolved; still, what is most of all to be desired, may be done, namely, the things which are true, and certain, and of real importance, may be made sufficiently plain to be the matter of our serious belief.

But to return. I stated it as a fact, that there are many sinners, to whom God does not give a new heart, and of course never determined to give it. Now as to the reason of this. As God has a just and sufficient reason for doing whatever he actually does; so he has a reason for not doing whatever he leaves undone. He does not always give account of his matters — does not, in every case, inform us what his particular reason or motive is; but he certainly has a reason. As to the case under consideration; God certainly has a reason for not regenerating those who will perish, — a reason which overbalances all the reasons which exist in favor of their regeneration, — a sufficient reason, he himself being judge. And he had the same reason for his previous purpose not to regenerate them. Doubtless God is just and right in not giving them a new heart; and he was doubtless equally just and right in determining not to do it. In both cases he acts according to his perfections.

But there are other things to be considered, besides his not giving the sanctifying influence of the spirit to the non-elect, or withholding it from them. As God is omniscient, he must have a perfect view of the whole created system, and of all that has a relation, near or remote, to each particular part of his administration; and his treatment of each case, and his determination thus to treat it, is grounded in his omniscience. Again; God's not giving his special, sanctifying grace to the non-elect, is not all that belongs to *their* case; it is not the whole of his treatment of *them*. And his purpose in this one respect, is not the whole of his purpose. He has actually placed them all under a dispensation of grace. He has provided a Saviour, and an atonement, and on the ground of this provision, he bestows unnumbered privileges and blessings upon them. But they are transgressors and continue to be transgressors amid all these privileges and blessings. To some of them

he gives the Scriptures, and the gospel ministry, and calls them to obedience; but they refuse obedience. He offers them salvation; but they reject it. His Spirit strives with them; but they always resist. He exercises long-suffering towards them; but they abuse it. He says to them, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" but they will not hear. Such, especially in Christian lands, is God's actual treatment of those, to whom he does not give his special grace; such is their character and conduct. Now does God owe such persons any favor? Especially does he owe them so great a favor, as the gift of his Holy Spirit to renew their hearts? All the circumstances of the case being taken into view, is it not evident, that God's withholding a gift so inconceivably precious, is an act of perfect righteousness? Has any one a claim to that blessing? Can any one rightly complain of God for not bestowing it? As a just and holy Sovereign, has he not good reason to withhold it? Whether we can discover the particular reason why the Omniscient God withholds the regenerating influence of his Spirit, or not; we are sure that he does withhold it; and we are sure he has in his own mind a reason for withholding it; we are sure he does it in perfect accordance with his justice and holiness, his wisdom and his goodness. And we are are equally sure, that his eternal purpose thus to withhold his grace, was founded on a sufficient reason, and was in perfect accordance with all his attributes. As in giving the renewing of his Spirit to some when they are no more deserving of it than others, he displays his sovereign grace, having "mercy on whom he will have mercy;" so in not giving that renewal to the rest, when they are no more ill-deserving than those to whom he gives it, he displays his sovereign justice. And as no one has any reason to find fault with the actual conduct of God in which he thus displays his grace and his justice, no one has any reason to find fault with his eternal purpose thus to do. Does it seem to you, that God's *purpose* not to save all men is unjust? I ask then, is God unjust in not saving all? Is he unjust in his actual treatment of those who perish? Can you stand up and bring a charge of unrighteousness, founded in truth, against the Lord of all? Can any of the non-elect say at the bar of God, that he has

injured them, and that they have not deserved the treatment they have received at his hand? No. Their mouth will be stopped, and they will stand guilty and self-condemned before God. And every man now, except the impious caviller and the blasphemer, will say, that God's treatment of those who perish, is throughout marked with perfect righteousness, and with astonishing forbearance and goodness. In this respect, as in all others, God must be justified in his doings, and accordingly must be justified in his purposes. As no charge can lie against him on account of his actual conduct towards the non-elect; no charge can lie against him on account of his correspondent predetermination.

I have not undertaken to give an account of all that God does, in regard to those who will finally perish. But I maintain — and what Christian does not believe it? — that all which God really does in giving existence to the non-elect, and in giving them existence in the fallen state in which they are found, — that all which he does in ordering the circumstances and events of their life — all the influence which he directly exerts upon them, and all that he brings to bear upon them from their fellow creatures, — in a word, that all his agency in or upon them, and all his providential dispensations towards them, are perfectly just and right. In all his dispensations, however inscrutable, from the beginning to the end of their life, he exercises his infinite wisdom and righteousness and goodness — he acts like himself. And if the whole course of his administration towards the non-elect, is thus perfectly right, his determination to pursue that same course is equally right. This is clear. So that if you object to God's purpose, you object to that conduct of his, by which his purpose is executed. And if you object to his conduct, you object to his character; for his conduct is the result and manifestation of his character; it shows what he is. On the other hand, if you approve of the *acts* of God, you must approve of his character and his designs. These perfectly harmonize. The same moral excellence is shown in them all. If you take the ground of an opposer, and object to either of them, you object to all. It is a solemn truth, that you cannot object to God's purpose not to save,

without objecting to his conduct in not saving, and without objecting also to his infinite perfections from which that purpose and that conduct flow. And if you do this, then all I can say is, "who art thou that repliest against God?"

Some men who maintain the doctrine of election, cannot easily admit the doctrine of reprobation. They see very clearly the propriety of God's determining to save his offending creatures; but they find much difficulty in supposing that he determines to destroy any of them.

A little consideration however must satisfy any man, that one of these doctrines necessarily involves the other. If God elects only a part of our race to salvation, he does not elect the rest. A determination to save all would exclude the idea of election. The choice of some leaves the rest as they were. Election is God's purpose to bestow upon some the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and final salvation in heaven. Reprobation is God's purpose to withhold that unmerited favor from others, and to inflict upon them a merited evil. The one is a gracious purpose, the other is a just purpose.

Two things are manifestly involved in reprobation. One is called *preterition*, or passing by those who are not elected, and leaving them in their natural, unrenewed state. The other is condemning and punishing them for their sins. The former is an act of sovereignty; both are acts of justice, particularly the latter. So the Apostle treats the subject in Rom. 9th. He compares God in this matter to a potter, who "formed of the same clay some vessels to honor and some to dishonor." As to the elect, he speaks of God as having *mercy* on them. As to the rest he speaks of God as hardening them, and showing his power and wrath — his just wrath, in their final punishment.

The statement and illustration which I have now given of Election and Reprobation agree with the Westminster Assembly's Confession of Faith.

"Those of mankind who are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world — according to his eternal and immutable purpose — hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out

of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith, or good works — or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace. — And as God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit, — are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation."

"The rest of mankind God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will — to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath *for their sins*, to the praise of his glorious *justice*."

The relation of God's purpose to his foreknowledge will be the subject of discussion through the remainder of this Lecture.

It is important, at the outset, to notice the difference between the *absolute knowledge* or *intelligence* of God, and his *knowledge* of *future events*. The knowledge of God taken in the general, absolute sense, reaches not only to those things which actually are or will be, but to all possible things. For example; God knew that a world could be created in many different forms. He had a perfect view of all the possible ways, in which his perfections might be displayed, — of all the beings which might be brought into existence, and of all the events which might take place. This is God's absolute knowledge. But his fore-knowledge relates to what will actually be. He fore-knows all the acts which he will perform, and all the events which will take place in consequence. The distinction is obvious. He eternally *knew* what worlds and systems he *could* create; he *fore*-knew what he *would* create. He knew that he could so order it, that we should be born in a heathen land. But he fore-knew that we should be born in a Christian land. He knew that the Saviour might come soon after the fall. He fore-knew that he would actually come 4000 years after. It might indeed be said, that God fore-knew not only all things which will be, but all things which might be. But the

word is not commonly used with such latitude of meaning. I shall use it in its common signification, as relating to what will actually take place.

There is another remark which is necessary to a right understanding of the subject, namely, that, strictly speaking, one thought, purpose or act in the divine mind, is neither antecedent nor consequent to any other. We cannot ascribe to the mind of God those particular measures or modes of action, which belong to created finite minds. And where, for the sake of convenience, we use language respecting God after the manner of men, we cannot reason from that language, as though it were literally and exactly true. From the imperfection of our knowledge, and from the very nature of our minds, we are under the necessity of speaking of God in an imperfect manner. But when we come to reason on the subject, we must not suffer the imperfection of our knowledge, or of our language, to lead us into error. While we are so often exposed to error from our ignorance, let us take care to use the knowledge we possess, as a safeguard.

We are now to examine the connection between the fore-knowledge of God and his purposes.

It is evident that the divine purposes are founded in *knowledge* — knowledge being taken in the large sense above noticed. And when I say the purposes of God are founded in knowledge, I mean that his purposes are *intelligent* purposes — that, in all his designs, he exercises his infinite understanding. In forming the plan of his operations, he acts as an omniscient Being. He perfectly knows his own attributes, and all things that are possible in a created universe; and with this perfect knowledge, he judges infallibly what is suitable for him to do; and that is what he determines to do. I would by no means make the impression, that God considers, and deliberates, and determines in the same manner with us. But what I have said must be true, speaking after the manner of men, and thinking after the manner of men, which is the only way in which we can speak or think. We may express the same thing by saying, God purposes intelligently, not ignorantly; wisely, not unwisely. This is the view we take of the

relation of God's purpose to his absolute knowledge. — But what relation has it to his *fore*-knowledge?

You will remember that in the mind of God neither of these can be before or after the other *in the order of time.* The acts of the divine mind have no such relation to time, as the acts of our minds have. They do not take place *successively*, like ours. This indeed is the only mode of mental operation, with which we are acquainted by experience, or of which we can form a clear conception. Still we cannot with propriety liken God to ourselves in this respect; although the idea of such a likeness cannot be easily excluded from our minds.

But if the fore-knowledge and purpose of God do not sustain to each other the relation of antecedent and consequent in the *order of time*, is not one before the other in the order of *nature?* Must we not conceive of the one as the *ground* of the other, and as presupposed in the other? And if so, which in our thought stands *first* — *first* in the order of *nature?* Is God's fore-knowledge of things which will take place the *ground* of his purpose that they shall take place, — or is his purpose that they shall take place the ground of his fore-knowledge that they will take place? Or to express it differently; does God purpose a thing because he knows before, that it *will* take place, or does he know that it will take place, because he purposes it? Take an example. Does God purpose the resurrection of the dead because he fore-knows that it will take place, or does he fore-know it, because he purposes it? These questions are easily answered, so far as the divine agency itself is concerned, and so far as any event depends on that agency. God certainly did not purpose to create the world, because he first knew that he would create it; for he did not know this, except as he purposed it. The creation of the world was dependent on God's will, and he fore-knew it as thus dependent; which is only saying, that he fore-knew it as it was. So far as future events are dependent on God, he fore-knows them *as* dependent, — he fore-knows that they will take place *as* they will take place, that is, in consequence of his determination. — How is it with yourselves? You know what your actions will be

next week, or next year, so far as you have determined what they shall be, and so far as you can be sure that your determination will be carried into effect. You do not first know what you will do, and then purpose to do it; but you purpose to do it, and then, so far as your purpose can be trusted, you know what your conduct will be.

In regard to God's own future acts; it is unquestionable that he fore-knows them only *as he predetermines them*, and *because* he predetermines them. But how is it with the events which take place among his creatures? I answer, the same is true of them, *so far as they depend on what God does.* If they result from any causes or influences which he appoints; then he fore-knows them *as* resulting from those causes or influences; that is, he fore-knows them *as they are* — fore-knows them *truly.* The death of the whole human race, except Noah and his family, was the natural consequence of the deluge; and God predetermined their death *as* the consequence of the deluge. And he knew beforehand that they would die, because he had purposed that which would certainly cause their death. You may say, that even the deluge was not the *immediate act of God*, but was *the consequence of natural causes.* This may be granted. Still those natural causes themselves depended ultimately and entirely on the will and agency of God; and he fore-knew their operation and effects *as* thus depending on himself. He could not fore-know them in any other way, because this was the true and the only way in which they could exist; and to suppose that he knew them in any other way, would be to suppose that he knew them *as they were not*, that is, that he made a mistake.

Take a case with which we are more specially concerned in this discussion. God eternally fore-knew that Peter and John and James would become true believers. But they became true believers in consequence of the special influence of his Spirit. He knew that they never would believe, if left without that influence. He knew they would believe, because he knew they would have that influence; and he knew they would have it, because he purposed to grant it to them. He cer-

tainly fore-knows who will repent from this time to the *end* of the world. He knows men will not repent, unless by his Spirit he gives them repentance; he knows to whom he has determined to give repentance, and of course he knows who will repent. It is not true, that he first knows who will repent, and then determines to give them repentance. The same remarks are applicable to everything which takes place. All events depend either directly on God's will and agency, or on those causes or influences, which are arranged and put in operation by his sovereign providence. Even the sins of wicked men result from the various influences which act upon them or within them; and God knows beforehand that they will result from them. The king of Egypt, with the character which he had, and in the circumstances in which he was placed, did himself, as a free, moral agent, refuse to let the children of Israel depart. And God knew beforehand that he would refuse. And God, for important reasons, determined to order all things respecting Pharaoh, *as he did order them*, knowing perfectly how he would act in consequence of such ordering. And universally, God knows that sinners, if left without the renewing of the Holy Ghost, will continue in sin. He certainly knows how many of the human race will continue in sin, because he knows how many he has determined to leave to pursue their own chosen course. He knows that being what they are, they will, of their own free choice, refuse to repent, in consequence of their depraved hearts, and in consequence of his withholding from them that influence of the Spirit, to which they have no claim, but without which they never will turn from their sins. Forget not that God foreknows all the events in the moral world as they are, that is, as dependent directly or indirectly upon his sovereign purpose, and the correspondent ordering of his providence. I maintain it as a universal truth, that God fore-knows things *as predetermined directly or consequently by his sovereign will;* in other words, as resulting either directly from his agency, or from those circumstances and influences which he appoints. Accordingly, in the order of *nature*, his purpose is before his fore-knowledge. His fore-knowledge presupposes it, and is grounded upon it.

LECTURE XXXIX.

THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES, PARTICULARLY AS TO FREE, MORAL AGENCY, EXAMINED.

In this and the following Lecture, I propose to examine the principal objections, which have been urged against the doctrine of the Divine Purposes.

Some of the objections against this doctrine manifestly arise from a mistaken idea of the doctrine. Many persons, and some whom we cannot but regard as real Christians, fail of forming a just conception of the doctrine, or they mistake in supposing that certain appendages belong to it, or that certain consequences flow from it, with which it is by no means chargeable. For the satisfaction of such persons, it is important that we should give clear, definite, and Scriptural explanations. Some objections are occasioned by the faulty phraseology of its advocates. Terms are used, which admit of different senses. If one of the senses is adopted, the doctrine set forth is false; whereas, if another sense is adopted, the doctrine is true. On this account, we should carefully define the sense in which we use words, and then steadily adhere to it. But in some cases it is expedient to substitute other terms, which are free from ambiguity, and which convey our meaning as definitely and exactly as possible. For example; the word *decree*, which is generally used to denote the doctrine, is ambiguous; and persons very frequently carry in their minds more or less of the Scriptural sense of the word, and thus have an impression, though it may be indistinct, that what is called the divine decree, is obligatory upon us, and that we cannot be inculpated for acting according to it. Now to guard against this palpable misapprehen-

sion, I have deemed it best to substitute *purpose*, *counsel*, and other words used by the sacred writers. Again; the word *arbitrary*, which properly signifies *according to one's will*, is often used in a bad sense, to signify *despotic*. In the first sense it may justly be applied, as it was by many of the old divines, to the purposes and acts of God; but in the last sense it is totally inapplicable.

Some men involve themselves in difficulties and objections by a habit of excessive speculation. From a mistaken estimate of their own intellectual powers, they grasp at knowledge which is unattainable. They push inquiries which the human mind is not able to answer. They pass over the line which bounds our intelligence, and labor to understand and explain what is not within the province of human reason. Others mistake, by dwelling disproportionately upon the difficult or obscure parts of the subject, and overlooking what is plain and obvious, thus filling their minds with doubts and objections, and depriving themselves of the benefit of a settled, Scriptural faith. If those who answer to either of these descriptions, would bring themselves to just and satisfactory views of the subject, it is indispensable that their habits of thinking and reasoning should be essentially altered, so that they may keep within the lines which bound human knowledge, and may give their chief attention to what is made evident and certain by reason or revelation, — treating mere speculative difficulties as they deserve to be treated, that is, with comparative neglect. The most just and proper way of disposing of certain things, which are apt to trouble us in our reasonings, as well as in the common affairs of life, is not to notice them.

But the objections which it is the most difficult to obviate, are those which arise from the disorders of the heart. The doctrine under consideration is suited to exalt God, and to humble man. For that very reason the proud and selfish heart is fruitful in objections. And how can you remove the objections, without removing the inward causes from which they originate? And in this matter, what can mere argument do? We have indeed our part to perform; but for the cure of the evil we must rely upon a higher power.

The principal objections against the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, and indeed all the objections in the way of reasoning, which appear to be of special consequence, are two. First; the doctrine is thought to be *inconsistent with our free, moral agency;* and secondly, it is thought to be *inconsistent with the moral perfections of God.*

First. The doctrine is thought to be inconsistent with our free, moral, accountable agency. If God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, — if he has, by an unchangeable purpose, determined what our conduct shall be; how can we be free and accountable agents?

I reply. Our actions must be determined by something; for no one can suppose our actions are what they are by chance, that is, without anything to determine them. Now may we not be free, moral agents, if our actions are determined by a divine purpose, as well as if they are determined by anything else? If they are determined by an unintelligent, physical cause; then surely we shall lose our free agency. Say that we determine our actions ourselves, by our own will, independently of any other cause, and that in this way we are evidently free, moral agents. But should we not be as much in danger of being enslaved or turned into machines by *our own will*, which is so fallible and capricious, as by the will of our wise and benevolent Creator? Again. It is doubtless essential to free, moral agency, that you should yourselves be real agents, and should, as intelligent, voluntary beings, determine your own actions. Now you may be as real agents, and may as truly determine your own actions, if they were previously determined by God, as if they were not. For surely God's purpose respecting your agency, does not prevent or destroy it. Suppose you yourselves had previously determined your present action, and, the time being come, you determine it now; and in conformity with your determination, you actually do the deed. Does that determination interfere with your free moral agency in the case? And why should you think that *God's* previous determination interferes with your free agency, any more than your own previous determination? May it not be, that you yourself do now as really determine your

own present action, on the supposition that *God* before determined it, as on the supposition that *you* before determined it? — Suppose that in any case you perform a particular action, and that you do it with deliberation, and in accordance with your own disposition, your own choice, your own will, your own free will, — and, if you please, with your own self-determining will; — in a word, that you do it with all the circumstances which you can possibly look upon as belonging to free moral agency. You are perfectly conscious of being free and accountable, conscious of possessing and fully exercising all the powers and faculties which a moral agent can be conceived to possess. Afterwards you find out, that another being, that is, God, certainly knew beforehand that you would perform that very action. Would the fact of its being fore-known alter the action? Would it alter your views of it? The action most surely is the same, as if it had not been fore-known. And suppose you find out, that God *predetermined* the action — the very action which you performed with a perfect consciousness that it was your own free action. Would the fact of its having been predetermined alter the action? Would it alter your views of the action? Did it alter the views which the murderers of Christ had of their conduct, when they were told that they had done what God determined before to be done? Whatever was the influence of God's purpose, it could not have been such, as to affect in any way the nature, the freedom, or the accountableness of the action, or of the agent, — except to prevent all infringement of his freedom and accountableness.

I ask then, why it should be supposed that our actions having been foreordained, is inconsistent with our accountable agency. It cannot be inconsistent, unless it supersedes or diminishes something which goes to constitute such agency. If our moral agency, and everything which belongs to it, remains unimpaired and uninterrupted under a divine predetermination; — if we act as freely and have as perfect a moral agency while our actions are foreordained, as we could have on any other supposition; then certainly there is no inconsistency between them. And it fairly belongs to those who allege that there is an inconsistency, to support their

allegation, and to tell us wherein the inconsistency lies. And we might properly stop here, regarding the charge of inconsistency as a mere pretence, until some evidence, besides a bare affirmation, is offered to prove its existence. But waving this privilege; I shall endeavor clearly to evince, that the divine purpose and our moral agency are perfectly consistent, and that the objection is destitute of weight.

I remark then, in the first place, — it is *possible* that the eternal purpose of God is consistent with our free moral agency. The apprehension, which is so apt to arise in the mind that the two things are inconsistent, may possibly be groundless. The human mind is very liable to mistake, and it may mistake here. We must admit that such a being as God, the Author of our existence, may possibly determine our actions, and carry his determination into effect, in such a manner as not to interfere with our freedom or responsibility. Our nature, our attributes, and our mode of acting as moral agents may be such, as to admit of the existence of a divine predetermination. It may be true, that our moral agency itself is one of the things which God has fixed in his eternal purpose; and of course it may be, that our moral agency is as certain as God's purpose. Yea, it may be, that all the free agency which we have or ever can have, is the direct and sure result of God's unchangeable and efficacious purpose. It is undoubtedly possible, that God eternally determined to make us free, moral agents, the proper subjects of his law. And he may have determined so to order every thing which can have an influence upon us, as to make it certain that we shall always be moral agents, and shall always be and feel ourselves to be justly accountable to the Supreme Lawgiver. — All this is certainly *possible* with God. Accordingly, no one has a right to make the broad affirmation, that God cannot predetermine our actions, and yet our actions be perfectly free and justly accountable. — And if self-determination, in any sense, is found to be an attribute of a moral agent; it is possible that even this may consist with a divine predetermination, as well as with anything else. All the self-determining power which we have, whatever it may be, was given to us by God. And it is possible that God eternally purposed to give us what we have.

But I do not stop with stating the bare possibility that God's eternal purpose may consist with our moral agency; although this is sufficient to check the confidence and rashness of those who affirm, that the two things cannot consist together. My next position is that it is not only possible, *but probable*, that the purpose of God and our free agency are consistent. It is certainly probable that God, of whom and through whom are all things, determined beforehand to give us such an existence and to endue us with such powers and faculties as we have; — and it is probable that the purpose of God, and all his agency in executing it, will be found to be such as not to disturb the free exercise of our powers. Considering his design in making us moral and accountable beings, it is, to say the least, highly probable that he will treat us as such, and that he will so order our condition, and so adapt his operations to our moral nature, that everything which belongs to accountable creatures, shall be secured to us. Considering what God is, and what we are, we must regard it as exceedingly improbable, that his purpose, and the nature and mode of acting which belong to us as moral beings, will in any respect be inconsistent with each other; in other words, that God will ever purpose anything, or do anything, which will prevent his rational creatures from being what he made them to be, and what he determined they should be. As God has created us to be the subjects of his moral government, we must think it altogether probable that whatever he does or designs to do, will be consistent with our character and condition as subjects of his government; that he purposed so to form and govern the moral world, that there should be no jar in his system, and no infringement on his part upon the rational and moral nature which he has given to his creatures.

But I add, in the third place, that *there is clear and certain evidence, that God's purpose and man's moral agency are actually consistent.* What I before affirmed to be possible and probable, I am now to show to be a certain truth.

The doctrine of the divine purpose is a plain, certain truth, and the doctrine of our free moral agency is also a plain, certain truth.

The evidence on which these truths rest is different, being in each case adapted to the nature of the subject. But though the evidence of the two truths is of a different nature, it is not on that account any the less clear and convincing. We have clear proof of the divine purposes from his known attributes, his works, and his word. The evidence arising from each of these sources, especially from all of them together, is so clear and full, as to leave not the least room for doubt. It is perfect moral demonstration. There is no doctrine of natural or revealed religion which is supported by more convincing arguments. And the evidence in this case is perfectly suited to the nature of the subject, and is the highest evidence which can be desired or conceived. The other truth, our free, moral agency, rests on evidence equally clear — the evidence of our consciousness. We know that the rainbow has such colors, by the sense of seeing, and that a stone is hard, by the sense of feeling. Seeing and feeling afford all the evidence which can be desired. We never seek evidence from the sense of hearing or tasting, to convince us of the colors of the rainbow, or the hardness of a stone. The same is true of our moral agency. We are conscious of it. We feel it. We know it. When a man sees light he knows that he sees it. And if he should say that light does not exist, or that he does not see it, he would say what he knows to be false. So if a man should say that he is not a free, moral agent, or that he does not know himself to be so, he would say what he knows to be false. We know our own free agency in the only way in which it is possible we should know it. If you should attempt, as some have done, to prove it by logical arguments, your arguments would be of no value, and you would fail of producing belief, just as you would, if you should attempt, in the same way, to prove the existence of light or the existence of pain. If a man wants the sense of vision, and does not himself see light, your arguments would avail nothing. If he sees light, your arguments are needless. So, if we were not conscious of being free moral agents, your arguments to convince us that we are such would be unavailing. As we are conscious of this — as we know it, your arguments to prove it are

not called for. And if you attempt to prove a thing in a way in which it cannot be proved, instead of producing belief, you may fill the mind with doubt.

It is indeed true, that the law, and the gospel, and the divine government in this world and in the world to come, and many other things, imply or presuppose, that we are moral and accountable beings. But none of these could furnish a convincing proof of it, or induce us to believe it, independently of our consciousness. If the divine law and government should be what they now are, and we were not conscious of moral, accountable agency, that law and government could have no bearing upon us.

We have then the two doctrines before us — God's eternal purpose, and man's free moral agency, — both supported by evidence which is clear and perfect, and suited to produce unwavering belief. Take each one by itself, and consider it honestly and fairly, and you must believe it. And if you believe each, you believe both. This is sufficient. If you believe both to be true, you believe them to be consistent with each other. Their consistency is involved in their truth. Such is the nature of the mind, that if you believe two doctrines to be true, you do and must believe them to be consistent; and if you know them both to be true, you know them to be consistent. To assert the contrary is a contradiction. And to believe the contrary would be to set aside the laws of our intelligent nature.

There is however a question, which we may not find it so easy to answer; namely, *how* are the two things consistent? In what way can their compatibility with each other be explained? The question, *are they consistent*, — I promptly answer in the affirmative. If you require me to prove the *fact* of their consistency, I point you to the evidence which shows each of them to be true. But if you ask whether I can show *how* they are consistent, — or can explain *in what manner* they can be reconciled with each other; I answer, this is what I do not undertake. And were I able to give an answer, it might be of no use. The benefit which comes to us from any doctrines, comes from a full, unwavering belief of their truth. It is the truth itself, brought into contact with the

mind, and made the property of the mind by faith — it is this which proves salutary. And the more directly we look upon the truth itself, the less we are diverted from it by other things, the more firm our belief of it, and the more tenaciously we keep hold of it; the greater will be the good we derive from it.

There is, I hold, no need of our ever attempting to explain *how* the divine purpose is consistent with our moral agency. And if any one should be continually asking, *how* they are consistent; I would just ask him *how* they are inconsistent. Let him labor a while at that. If he will fairly prove that either of the two doctrines is false, while the other is true, I will admit the fact of their inconsistency. But while he fails to prove either of them to be false, I can by no means admit that they are inconsistent. If he still asserts an inconsistency, I shall require him to show *how* two doctrines, which are both true, are or can be inconsistent; which will be the same as for him to show, how both of the doctrines can be true, while one of them is not true.

But there is another way of satisfying ourselves of the consistency of the two doctrines, and that is, *actual experience*, — experience in the largest sense, uniform and universal experience. This is a sure test in all cases where we can avail ourselves of it. If there had been any inconsistency — if the one had interfered with the other; it must have been discovered before now. The divine purpose in regard to the actions of men has existed and has been executed thousands of years, as the Bible teaches. Has it ever superseded or interfered with men's moral agency? On the other hand, free moral agency has been in the world, and has for thousands of years been showing itself in all conceivable forms. But has it ever interfered with the divine purpose, or prevented the execution of it? The two things have existed and operated every year, and every day — yea, every moment, since the creation of the world, and have worked together with as entire consistency, as either could have worked alone; — worked alone, did I say? — why, in a moral world, neither of them could possibly have existed alone.

Consult the history of divine providence, so far as it is contained

in the Bible, and see how the purposes of God respecting the moral world are continually brought into view; and see how they have continually been carried into effect, not only *among* free, moral agents, but *in* and *by* their *free, moral actions*. Look at the known purposes of God respecting Abraham and his posterity. What an inconceivable multitude of moral agents and moral actions were involved in their accomplishment. It was by means of those free, moral agents and acts, that God's designs were executed. — Turn off your mind from irrelevant, fruitless, and perplexing speculations, and attend to the teachings of God's word and providence. Read the history of Jacob's family, particularly of Joseph. God's purpose in every case was accomplished by means suited to the end, — means divinely appointed, consisting chiefly in the good and bad actions of men. The purpose of God moved on in connection with the actions of men, and their actions moved on with the purpose of God, and accomplished it. They were joined together in the whole course of providence. They never interfered with each other. Now if in the instances referred to, man's moral actions have consisted with the unchangeable purpose of God, they may consist, and doubtless do consist with it in all other cases. God determines what shall take place among moral beings in one instance as much as in another; in all instances, as much as in any.

As however the argument from history and experience is cumulative, I shall give a few more examples, in which the divine purpose is represented as joined with man's free agency. And I shall select those, which are peculiarly striking and which present the greatest difficulties in speculation.

In rehearsing the history of the journey which the Israelites made from Egypt to Canaan, Moses [Deut. 2: 30] mentions the reasonable request they made to Sihon to let them pass through his land. Sihon and his people were exceedingly wicked and the time for their merited punishment had arrived. Accordingly, "Sihon would not let us pass by him," said Moses, "for the Lord thy God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thine hand." This was God's purpose. And he so ordered things that his purpose was accomplished.

Sihon was so infatuated, that he came out in war against the Israelites, — though the Israelites were very peaceful and honorable. And the Lord delivered Sihon and his people into the hand of the Israelites, who in obedience to the divine direction, destroyed them, and laid their cities waste. Here you see the design of God to visit the wickedness of Sihon and his people with a just punishment. You see that God so ordered things, that Sihon's heart should be turned against the Israelites, and that, contrary to his own interest, he should refuse to let them pass through his land, — for *this very purpose*, Scripture says, *that he might deliver him into the hand of the Israelites.* Sihon was a moral, accountable agent and was exceedingly depraved and hard hearted in refusing to comply with the proposal of the Israelites. And in consequence of his refusal, he and his people were cut off. The case is very plain. Who can read the passage without understanding the meaning?

There is a similar passage in Joshua 11: 20. Joshua made war against the various tribes of Canaanites, as God had commanded. And the sacred historian says: "There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites, the inhabitants of Gibeon. All the others they took in battle. *For* it was *of the Lord* to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly — as the Lord commanded Moses." The iniquity of the Canaanites was now full; and God's purpose was that they should be cut off, and that the Israelites should come into possession of the land promised to their fathers. God so arranged things in his providence, that the Canaanites should come in battle against the Israelites, and thus subject themselves to the righteous judgments of heaven. How evident it is, that God's purpose consisted with man's moral accountable agency.

The case of Senacherib is equally striking. God's express purpose was, to send that fierce and cruel monarch to inflict severe punishment upon the rebellious children of Israel. He did send him; and that tyrant did inflict the intended punishment. The divine purpose was a just and unchangeable purpose, and the

agency of Senacherib was moral and accountable. And the Prophet Isaiah tells us, that for that very conduct, by which God's purpose was accomplished, Senacherib was himself visited with a terrible destruction. He executed the divine purpose; but he was none the less guilty for that; because, as the Prophet says, he did it wickedly. And no wicked, blood-thirsty tyrant ever deserved punishment, more than he did. Read the passage, Isa. 10th, and observe how manifest it is, that the purpose of God and the free moral agency of man existed together without interference. Whatever else is obscure or difficult, this is plain.

Christ's death is generally and with great propriety referred to in this connection. It was the design of God that Christ should be crucified for the redemption of the world, and that he should be crucified by his enemies. From the nature of the case, he could not be crucified and slain by his friends. It was a work for the accomplishment of which they were not fit instruments. Accordingly his enemies were employed. And the history shows, and the Apostle Peter expressly declares, that they did it *with wicked hands*, and that *they did what the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done.*

Let no one suppose, that the cases I have mentioned are essentially different from others. The whole series of moral actions, yea, the whole series of sinful actions among men are to be regarded as standing in two relations. They are related to the purpose and providence of God; and in this relation they take place according to the counsel of his will, and accomplish his holy ends. The same actions are also related to man, who is a free, moral agent, and justly accountable for his conduct. Here is a great system of rational beings, who are to exist forever, and to be forever putting forth free, moral actions; — and all under the control and in accordance with the purpose of God, and so directed and overruled as to accomplish the ends of his benevolence and his justice. In this moral universe God will do all his pleasure. The wrath of man, as well as the piety of man, shall praise him. The Lord reigneth, and he reigneth in the midst of holy beings, and in the midst of sinful beings. And what has been true in past ages,

and is now true, will be true in all ages to come. Men have their province as free moral agents, and as large a province as they could reasonably desire. But they are dependent on God, and they cannot get away from his sovereign dominion, or frustrate his purposes.

It is not so common for objections to be made against the doctrine, that God pre-determines the *good* actions of men. And yet there is the same ground of objection. For if God's pre-determining the sinful actions of men interferes with their freedom and accountability; it must equally interfere with their freedom and accountability to pre-determine their good actions. But it has been made evident from universal experience and observation, and from the facts exhibited in the Scriptures, that there is no interference in either case. Christians, who are conscious of free moral agency, gratefully acknowledge that, in all their acts of obedience, God works in them to will and to do, and that he does it according to his purpose. It is clear then, from experience and observation, and the teachings of Scripture, that the purpose of God has existed in connection with the free, moral agency of men, both good and bad, and that both have moved on together without the least interference, or the least appearance of inconsistency. Hence the objection, which has so often been urged as conclusive against the doctrine of the divine purposes, is entirely groundless and futile.

LECTURE XL.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD. OBJECTIONS EXAMINED, PARTICULARLY THAT FROM HIS MORAL ATTRIBUTES.

THE other objection which we are to consider is, *that our doctrine is inconsistent with the moral perfections of God.*

Now in what point of view is the doctrine supposed to be inconsistent with God's perfections? It cannot be that the mere fact of God's having a purpose, is thought to be objectionable; for this manifestly results from his intelligence and goodness. You cannot conceive that God is an intelligent and good being, and yet has no purpose or design. Those who most strenuously object to the doctrine of God's purposes, would make no objection, if they believed them to be in accordance with their wishes. And if his purposes were in all respects what they desire them to be, they would never object to their being eternal and immutable. They would regard it as a very pleasing doctrine, that God eternally determined to proceed in his government, and to manage their affairs and the affairs of others, according to their judgment and choice. I say then, that men do not object that there are divine purposes, but that they are what they are. Let us then examine the force of the objection in this point of view.

From the very nature of the case it is evident, that the purposes of God, as they are presented before us in his word and providence, are the direct result and manifestation of his perfections; so that, if you object to his purposes, you must for the same reason object to his perfections. If you have no objection against his perfections, you cannot consistently have any against

his purposes. These remarks show the real position of objectors. For it will be found, that instead of objecting to the purposes of God because they are contrary to his perfections, they really object to his perfections. While they assume the appearance of veneration for God's moral attributes, those attributes are in fact the object of their dislike. I say then to any objectors, — why do you so impose upon yourselves as to think, that you object to the purposes of God's infinite mind as they are made known in his word and providence, because they are contrary to his moral attributes, when it is in reality because those purposes are contrary to your inclinations, and tend to thwart your favorite pursuits? Inquire then, whether this is a proper ground of objection. If your inclinations and pursuits are wrong, it is certainly right that the divine purposes should be opposed to them. And if you object to God's purposes on this ground, it is easy to see where the fault lies.

I again press the inquiry. Why do you allege that the purposes of God are contrary to his moral attributes? You say, perhaps, that your objection lies against the common orthodox doctrine, because it imputes to God such purposes, as *would be* contrary to his moral attributes. To this I reply, that if any doctrine imputes purposes to God which are not ascribed to him in the Scriptures, and which are not made manifest in divine providence; that is not the doctrine which I have undertaken to defend. The divine purposes of which I speak, are those which are plainly declared in the Bible, and plainly executed in the divine administration. The doctrine which asserts these, is the doctrine which I maintain. The question returns; why do you object to the purposes of God? Is it because his purposes are different from those which would be dictated by the wisdom of man? But this is far from being a just ground of objection. For our wisdom is very imperfect, and adapted only to a very small sphere of action. Our minds, when most enlarged, fall infinitely short of comprehending the system of the universe. All the judgments which we naturally form, proceed from imperfect and narrow views. And how can we suppose that the all comprehensive

plan which infinite wisdom has adopted, will be level to our understanding, and will be such, as we in our ignorance and littleness should have contrived ?

The objection which we are considering, is most frequently urged against the divine purposes in relation to two points; *the existence of evil*, and *the distinction which is made between the elect and the non-elect.*

As to the first; the objector says, the supposition that God foreordained the existence of sin and misery is irreconcilable with his holiness and goodness. I freely acknowledge, that all the attempts of Calvinists, Arminians and Pelagians to account philosophically for the existence of evil, and to remove the difficulties attending the subject, have failed of giving satisfaction. This failure cannot be attributed to any one theological or metaphysical system in distinction from others. It belongs to them all; though in different degrees. I shall here quote a passage from Dr. Whately's work on the writings of St. Paul. "I would suggest one caution relative to a class of objections frequently urged against the Calvinistic scheme — those drawn from the moral attributes of the Deity, which, it is contended, render the reprobation of a large class of mankind an absolute impossibility. That such objections do reduce the predestinarian to a great strait, is undeniable; — and not seldom are they urged with exulting scorn, with bitter invective, and almost with anathema. But we should be very cautious how we employ such weapons, as may recoil upon ourselves. Arguments of this description have often been adduced, such as, I fear, will crush beneath the ruins of the hostile structure the blind assailant who has overthrown it. It is a frightful but undeniable truth, that multitudes even in Christian countries, are born and brought up under such circumstances, as afford them no probable, often no possible chance of obtaining a knowledge of Christian truths, or a habit of moral conduct, but are even trained from infancy in superstitious error and gross depravity. Why this should be permitted neither Calvinist nor Arminian can explain; nay, why the Almighty does not cause to die in the cradle every infant whose future wickedness and misery,

if suffered to grow up, he foresees, — is what no system of religion, natural or revealed, will enable us satisfactorily to account for. In truth these are merely branches of the *one* great difficulty, *the existence of evil*, which may almost be called the only difficulty in theology. It assumes indeed various shapes. It is by many hardly recognized as a difficulty; and not a few have professed and believed themselves to have solved it; but it still meets them, though in some new and disguised form, at every turn; — like a resistless stream, which when one channel is dammed up, immediately forces its way through another. And as the difficulty is not *peculiar to any one* hypothesis, but bears equally on all, whether of revealed or of natural religion, it is better, in point of prudence as well as of fairness, that the consequences of it should not be pressed as an objection against any. The Scriptures do not pretend, as some have rashly imagined, to clear up this awful mystery; they give us no explanation of the original *cause* of the evil that exists; but they teach us how to avoid its effects. And since they leave this great and perplexing question just where they find it, it is better for *us* to leave it among the secret things which belong unto the Lord our God, and to occupy ourselves with the things which are revealed, and which concern us practically — which *belong* unto us and to our children, that we may "do all the words of God's law."

Being satisfied of the justice of these remarks I shall not undertake to solve the difficult problem here brought before you. But if you allege that the doctrine which represents God as predetermining the existence of evil, is inconsistent with his moral perfections, I call for the reasons of this allegation. Those objectors with whom I am concerned admit, that the Scriptures are the word of God, and contain a just exhibition of his attributes and his purposes. Now do not the Scriptures teach, that in many instances God predetermined the sins of men? A careful examination of the subject will show, that your objection really lies against the word of God. And I cannot see how you can consistently reject the common doctrine, while you receive the Bible as the standard of your faith. Even if you give up the Bible, and

go to the works of God, and to the teachings of natural reason, you will meet with the same difficulty, — a difficulty which the wisest heathen philosophers have been utterly unable either to evade or to solve. Evil does exist. It exists in a world which God planned and created; and which he created knowing perfectly what it would be. It exists in a world formed by him who possesses infinite wisdom and power, and who, if he had chosen, could have formed and governed the world so as to exclude it. If you deny that God could have done this, then you must hold to a necessity, which was superior to the will of an omnipotent God, and prevented him from doing what he chose to do. Evil exists, and it exists either according to God's purpose, or contrary to it. If according to his purpose, — you have the Calvinistic doctrine. If contrary to his purpose, then there was some principle or power, which prevailed over God's power, and successfully resisted his will, in the first formation or in the government of intelligent creatures.

The objector says, that the very fact that God predetermined the existence of sin and eternally included it in the plan of the intelligent creation, is directly contrary to his *holiness*, and contrary to *the requisitions of his law*. I freely acknowledge that there is, to our imperfect understanding, a mighty difficulty here; and all I can pretend to do, is to show that God's predetermining the existence of sin, is not in fact either contrary to his holiness or inconsistent with his giving us such a law. *Sin* is indeed contrary to God's holiness. But there is no sin in God; and there is nothing in his purposes, in his law or government, which gives it any countenance. There is, I admit, an *appearance* of inconsistency in this case. But because to our weak fallible minds two things *appear* inconsistent, is it therefore certain that they are inconsistent? May it not be that the clearer light which we hope for in the future state, will show us that there never was any inconsistency, and that the appearance of it which once troubled us, was the consequence of our ignorance? We often make use of a consideration like this, to satisfy the minds of children. Many things come before them with an appearance of

inconsistency. We tell them those things once appeared inconsistent to us; but that we are now satisfied that they are perfectly consistent. And we tell them to wait awhile, and they will be satisfied too.

Do you ask in what particular way, or by what means, I myself have become satisfied, that God's foreordaining moral evil is reconcilable with his moral perfections and with his commands? If a reply to such an inquiry may be of any use to you, I will give it freely.

In coming to a satisfactory view of this subject, I first shall lay it down as a settled principle, that the Bible is the word of God, and that it teaches the truth, and teaches it intelligibly and plainly. I then feel it to be my duty to come to it as a learner, and to receive whatever God declares, as certain truth, whether conformed or not to my previous conceptions. And I expect, as a matter of course, that this divine teacher will show me, that many of the notions which I have entertained are erroneous, and will reveal many things which are new and strange, and contrary to what I should have supposed to be true. I come thus directly to the word of God, resolved to receive with an implicit faith whatever it teaches. And what does it teach in regard to the present subject? It teaches, that God is perfectly holy and that he requires holiness of us; that he hates sin, and forbids it, and will inflict the most dreadful punishment on those who commit it. This the Bible teaches. This I therefore regard as certain truth. And henceforth I hold, with unwavering confidence, that *God is holy;* that he hates sin, and in his law forbids it, and enforces the prohibition by a severe penalty. But the same inspired book teaches, that, in many instances, God foreordained the very sin which he hates, and which his law forbids. What now shall I do? Shall I call in question the holiness of God? Shall I doubt whether his law is a true expression of his heart? No. Shall I then deny that in the instances referred to he has predetermined the existence of sin? I cannot do this, because I believe that the word of God teaches nothing but what is true. What then am I to do? The answer is, *believe both;* and that

because the infallible word of God declares both; — which is perfect evidence that both are true, and that God intends I shall believe both. What! believe them both, when I am not able to see how they can be reconciled? Yes; I will believe them both, though quite unable to see how they can be reconciled. And as I have such evidence as leads me to believe that they are both true; I believe one thing more; namely, that they are consistent with each other, and that they *can* be reconciled. But how can I believe them consistent, when they appear inconsistent? Answer. I believe that the appearance of inconsistency is fallacious. Each of the two points is known to be a truth, and I am sure that every truth is consistent with every other truth, and that God sees the consistency, and that I should see it, if I had sufficient knowledge. I do then believe them consistent, because I have *evidence* of their consistency. What evidence? Why, the same evidence I have, that they are both true. It is certainly reasonable to believe that which is fairly proved, though contrary to present appearances. I believe without hesitation that the sun is vastly larger than the earth, though it appears so small. I believe this contrary to the appearance, because I have evidence that the appearance is deceptive. Thus, on the ground of complete proof of the holiness of God, and of his purposing the existence of evil, I am brought to believe them both; and, in opposition to every appearance of inconsistency, to believe them perfectly consistent. Sometimes it is my practice to dismiss the question of their consistency, and content myself with believing each of the truths. There is evidence of this truth, and there is evidence of that. I will therefore receive them both as truths, and pass unnoticed the question of their consistency, as the Scriptures do. The sacred writers teach with great clearness, that God predetermined the existence of those very sins, which were forbidden by his law, and against which he showed his holy displeasure. They teach that men "with *wicked* hands" "do that which he determined before to be done," and for which he punishes them, — implying that his previous purpose does not interfere with his holiness and justice. The sacred writers teach both.

But they never undertake to show how they are to be reconciled. I would copy their example, fully believing both truths, and leaving them to work out their own reconciliation.

Now I should be satisfied, even if nothing more could be said on the subject. But I have other reflections which I will lay before you, and which will make a still more complete disclosure of the history of my own mind, and which will, I hope, contribute something to the satisfaction of others.

And here I ask myself, whether this or any other train of reflections can lead me to believe two propositions, which are really contradictory? I answer, no. But it may lead me to believe two propositions which have an *appearance* of being contradictory. And this is only saying, that clear evidence may satisfy me, that an impression which has been made on my mind, is false. The evidence in such a case may be so clear, as completely to erase the impression, so that it shall no longer have any influence upon the mind. The first and the natural impression made upon all men is, that the earth is vastly larger than the sun, and is always at rest. And this would continue to be the impression, were it not for the clear, demonstrative evidence, which the science of astronomy exhibits to the contrary. As soon as we become acquainted with this evidence, we are satisfied that our senses are imperfect and fallible, and that the impression we had respecting the sun and the earth was deceptive; and we come at length to disregard that impression, and to believe without doubt the principles of science relative to the solar system.

In this way I become convinced, that the seeming contradiction between the Divine Trinity and the Divine Unity, is not a real contradiction. Indeed the more I examine these subjects, the more I am convinced that there is no contradiction in the doctrines of Scripture, and that the allegations against them are without any solid basis.

But in regard to the subject before me, is it not clear and certain that there is a real contradiction? I answer, no. My saying that God predetermined the existence of moral evil, is not necessarily saying, that he is unholy. For it may be, that he predeter-

mined the existence of moral evil in such a way, as to be no stain upon his holiness. Yea, he may have predetermined it in such a way, as not only to preserve his character for holiness, but to make his holiness more manifest. And this higher manifestation of his holiness may have been a reason for his purpose. But I ask myself, whether God's purposing the existence of sin does not necessarily imply that he looks upon it with approbation. It must be acknowledged that for *us* to determine or fore-ordain the existence of sin, would betray the love of sin. But because such a determination in us, and in our way of determining, would show the love of sin, it does not follow that it would show the love of sin for God, in his way, to fore-ordain its existence. Many things are evidently right, as done by God, *in his way* of doing them, which it would not be right for us to do in our way. The rectitude of an action done by God, may arise from the fact, *that he is God*, and that he acts *as God*, to whom no one in heaven or earth can be likened. It may arise from the fact, that his *manner* of doing it is such, as we are not capable of. And an action which is seemingly of like kind in man, may be wholly unallowable, because man is not God, and cannot do the action *as God does it*. The action of the two is, in reality, far from being the same. Here I have found the source of many of the difficulties which have arisen in my own mind, in reading the history of Pharaoh. I am sure it would be sinful for me to do anything purposely to harden the heart of a fellow creature. But I see that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, or as the meaning may be, that he gave him up to hardness of heart, or that he infatuated him, and that he purposed to do it. But here I am stopped; for what God really did in that case was exceedingly different from what I should do, if I should go about to harden a man's heart, and to influence him to wrong and fatal conduct. In doing this, *I* should be accessory to his sin. But God was not an accessory to the sin of Pharaoh. He was in no sense a partaker of his guilt. He was infinitely distant from it. If I should undertake such a thing, I should be guilty of tempting a fellow creature to sin. But God does not tempt man to sin. It was as true of Pharaoh, as ever it was of any one,

that he was tempted and drawn away of his own lust — his own proud, wicked disposition. It would be preposterous and wicked in *me*, to lay my commands upon any one, and then to order it so, as to prevent him from complying with my commands. But what God did was not at all like such conduct in me. When God did just what the sacred writer says he did, in hardening Pharaoh's heart, he at the same time, with the holiness, the sincerity and the authority of a God, commanded him to let the people go. In all this God's ways were not our ways, nor his thoughts our thoughts. Again, I find, that notwithstanding what God did in hardening Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh himself was chargeable with all the guilt of his hardness and disobedience. This the whole history makes clear. And this is the same as to say, that God's purpose was far from being such as to make him a partaker in the sin of Pharaoh, or to detract in the least from Pharaoh's guilt. Neither Pharaoh's sin nor the sin of any others can be attributed to God as *his* sin. He was not the sinning agent. All the agency he had was as holy as any act of his own eternal mind — as holy as holiness itself.

In this way I check my own headlong thoughts, and guard against dishonorable apprehensions of God, by keeping in mind, that God is not man, and that his thoughts and ways are as high above ours, as the heavens are above the earth. But the objection in regard to God's moral attributes has often come up in this form; that for him to fore-ordain the existence of that which is hurtful in its own nature, and which leads to endless suffering, is utterly inconsistent with his infinite benevolence, which seeks to promote, and in connection with omnipotence will promote the highest welfare of the creation. In this case as in many others, I can in an instant bring up a difficulty to my mind, which, though in reality of no weight, cannot be fully obviated without much time and labor. The manner in which I have disposed of the difficulty just mentioned, is as follows.

The benevolence of God, of which I have abundant evidence, must be great in proportion to the greatness of his own mind. Our benevolence is confined to very narrow limits. But the be-

nevolence of God is boundless, extending its regards to the immeasurable universe, and seeking to promote the highest good of the whole through an endless duration. In the exercise of his infinite wisdom, he must have adopted a plan, suited to accomplish that object. Now if God sees that a system which will admit evil, is on the whole best suited to accomplish his great object; will it not be consistent with his benevolence to adopt it? Nay, will not his benevolence require him to adopt it? Here I first resort to the infinitude of God's benevolence, then I make the supposition that God can best accomplish the great object of his benevolence by a system which has a mixture of evil. If it is so, then I say that his benevolence will not only admit but require the adoption of such a system. The principle implied in this train of thought is, the subserviency of evil to good. God, in the exercise of his infinite wisdom and benevolence, makes evil the means of promoting good. Sin, in its own nature, is not the object of God's desire. Considered in itself, as sin, he abhors it, and forbids it. And he shows that he abhors it, by the manner in which he treats it in his government. His treatment of sin is an expression of his heart in regard to it. But cannot God make use of this evil thing in his moral creation, as a means of the highest good? If so, then his purpose that a system shall exist containing a mixture of evil, will be not only consistent with his benevolence, but will result from it.

But here I find it necessary to check the tendency of my thoughts, and to qualify my reasoning, lest I should be conducted to a false and dangerous conclusion. I ask myself, do I not in all this hold, that God acts on the principle of doing evil that good may come? Far from it. God cannot do evil. He cannot commit sin. He is infinitely holy. As to the moral evil which exists, he is not the *doer* of it. His purposes and the ordering of his providence respecting sin are perfectly holy. And all the use he makes of it, is holy and benevolent. Sinning is the act of creatures entirely and exclusively — as much so as if there were no other being in the universe. Though dependent on God, they have a moral agency of their own. And when God in one way or another directs and controls it, he directs and controls it *as their agency*, not

his. This then is clear, that God never does evil; that is, moral evil, that good may come; that all moral evil is perpetrated by dependent moral agents, and that the blame-worthiness of it belongs to them wholly and exclusively.

Thus far my mind is settled. On the supposition that God can, in a perfectly holy manner, make evil subservient to the greatest good, it is nowise inconsistent with his infinite benevolence to purpose the existence of it in his creatures.

As to the real concern which God has in this matter, it comes before different minds under different aspects. Some choose to present it in this light. Take mankind just as they are, moral agents in a depraved state. God sees that in whatever circumstances they are placed, they will sin, unless by a special influence he prevents. He knows that on the whole it is not best that he should interpose to prevent their sinning, and accordingly he purposes not to prevent it. In this view, sin is the certain consequence of God's withholding or not exercising a special agency to prevent it. This representation, so far as it goes, is I admit substantially correct, and is adapted to afford relief to many, who cannot be relieved in any other way. But it occurs to me at once, that this statement overlooks a principal part of the difficulty, and leaves us at last under the necessity of submitting as entirely, as any other view of the subject, to the unsearchable will of God. For admitting that human beings in all circumstances will sin unless God shall specially interpose to prevent; the question naturally arises; who made these human beings? And why did he make them such as they are, and give them such a decided and universal tendency to sin? And as he sees them to be in such a state, why does he not interpose to prevent them from sinning? Here are depths which I cannot sound, and I see no way of ultimate relief, but to remember how utterly incompetent I am to judge, and to leave the difficulties, however great, to be disposed of by the incomprehensible wisdom of God.

I return now to the train of thoughts which have contributed most to my own satisfaction. I have made the supposition, that in the divine government, evil is made subservient to good; and if so,

that God may consistently with his benevolence permit and appoint it for that purpose. My next step is to inquire, whether there is clear evidence, that this supposition is according to fact. And here I quickly arrive at the result. For I perceive, that the principle of the subserviency of evil to good pervades both the word and the providence of God. The longer I live, and the more I study the divine word and works, the more fully I am persuaded, that this is a principle of preëminent importance in the moral system. And in some passages, the word of God expressly teaches that it is so. It declares that God means for good what sinners do with evil intent; and that the wrath of man shall be turned to his praise. And it shows that the greatest instance of good conceivable, — the salvation of sinners — is brought about by means of the most flagrant evil in man; and that it is brought about in this way according to the divine purpose. The purpose of God respecting moral evil, viewed in this light, I see to be perfectly consistent with benevolence, and to result from it. Here I rest. God purposes the existence of moral evil, and orders things so that it will take place, for the promotion of the most desirable and momentous object. Were it not his intention thus to overrule it and make it subservient to his wise and holy ends, there is not the least reason to think he would have ordained its existence, or would have suffered it to take place.

Once more. When I find it difficult to contemplate this subject in its relation to the divine purpose; I dismiss that view, and contemplate it in its relation to the divine providence. I notice the current of events, and treasure up the facts of my own experience. I observe, in my own life and in that of others, the train of causes and effects, of means and ends; the mixture of good and evil, and in many instances, the actual subserviency of evil to good. I am struck with the wonders of providence, with the depth of its designs, and the gradual unfolding of its mysteries. And after I have obtained what light I can, by the study of God's word and works, I put the question to myself; can I see anything exceptionable in the principles of the divine administration? I can see enough that is wrong in myself, and in my fellow-creatures. But

can I see anything wrong in the divine conduct? — anything at variance with justice or goodness? Far from it. There is no act of God, no measure of his administration, viewed in its proper connections, which is not manifestly holy, just, and good. I then turn to the other part of the subject and say; here in this holy, just, and good system of the divine government, I have the counterpart of God's eternal designs. Such as his conduct is now, such was his previous purpose. I see the exact representation of his eternal counsels in his present acts. These acts and these corresponding counsels of his will are both worthy of a God.

After all, I must say, that there are objections and difficulties which sometimes take such a shape in my mind, that the only way to dispose of them satisfactorily is, to come down in humble submission before God.

I have remarked on the objection against the general doctrine of the divine purposes in relation to our free moral agency, and in relation to the moral attributes of God. But I have not yet looked at the objection, as it respects the particular purpose of *election*, having reserved this to be considered by itself. And here also I shall take the liberty to disclose to you the process of reasoning which I have pursued in my own mind.

This then is the objection against the doctrine of election which I have to meet, namely, that it is incompatible with the moral perfection of God that he should determine to bestow the blessings of salvation on a part of the human race, and not on the rest. I first try to analyze the objection. Is it contrary to God's infinite goodness that he should determine to bestow great and undeserved blessings on a part of the human race? Clearly not. But the thought occurs, that the blessings conferred are undeserved, and that justice calls for punishment. In regard to this, I say to myself; suppose that the difficulty is removed; suppose that the mediation of Christ has had such an effect, that God can be just while he pardons and saves them that believe. On this supposition, what is there contrary to the moral perfections of God, in his saving a part of those who deserve to perish? Will it not be a great favor to those who are saved? And will it be any injury to those who are

not saved? Does he do any injustice to them, by showing mercy to others? And has he not a right to do what he will with his own? But I ask myself, how this is consistent with Peter's declaration, Acts 10: 34, that *God is no respecter of persons.* I inquire then for the meaning of that declaration. The meaning is, as the passage itself shows, that in every nation among Gentiles as well as Jews, God will accept those who worship and serve him; and in general that he is not influenced by outward circumstances, or any personal regards, in the bestowment of his favors. If he chose men to salvation on account of their birth, or their outward condition, or because of any partial attachment to them; this indeed would be acting from respect of persons. But all this is excluded. God does not elect men to salvation on any such grounds as these, but from his own sovereign will, that is, for reasons which he deems sufficient, but which to us are past finding out.

But is not this doctrine suited to have a bad effect on Christians? If they believe God has eternally made them the objects of his special love, will they not be lifted up with an idea of their own importance, and be self-complacent and proud? This, I see, will be the natural effect of the doctrine upon those, who presumptuously think themselves to be God's chosen people, while they are unrenewed and selfish. But the nature of the subject shows, and facts show, that the doctrine of election, as held by *real* Christians, is preëminently adapted to produce in them the deepest humility and self-abasement, the liveliest gratitude to God, and the most devout admiration of his infinite love and grace. If there is any effectual cure of the pride and vanity of the heart, it is in part at least found in the cordial belief of this doctrine.

But does not God's eternal purpose to renew and save particular persons, set aside their freedom and make them machines? To answer this, I appeal to the inspired writers. Do they represent the matter in this light? I appeal to Christians. Did they ever find in their own experience, that God's purpose to sanctify and save them, and the corresponding operations of his grace, interfered with their liberty, and made them mere machines? Will they not all testify, that it was while acting under God's effectual purpose

and grace, that they were enabled to cast off their bondage, and were brought into the only true liberty?

But how often have I been troubled with the thought, that the doctrine of election has a gloomy and painful bearing on the non-elect; that while it secures everlasting blessedness to God's chosen people, it seals the everlasting misery of the rest! Thus to my disquieted mind, the doctrine has often been invested with deformity and horror. This uncomfortable view of the subject I have met in the following way. First; I have considered the whole human race *as they are*, all sinners, deserving to suffer the penalty of God's law. But God, in his rich mercy chooses some to salvation. Does this injure the rest? Does it in any way hinder their salvation? Does it bring upon them an undeserved misery? — a punishment above what justice requires them to suffer? And could it alleviate their sufferings, to see all their fellow-creatures as miserable as they are? An envious and malevolent disposition is itself a source of misery, and seeing the misery of others would afford no relief. As the non-elect never suffer more than what is their due, they can have no ground of complaint. But this is not saying all. For upon those who are not saved, especially upon those who enjoy the light of revelation, God bestows unnumbered favors; calls them to repentance, and offers them salvation, just as he does the elect; and often exercises great long-suffering towards them, — making it manifest, that he is rich in mercy, and that if they perish, it will be wholly their own fault. Suppose there was no purpose of election, and no effectual grace. Then all would fall under a righteous condemnation. But now God, in his sovereign mercy, determines to save a large portion of our fallen race. The rest he leaves to pursue their own chosen way, and to suffer exactly what they deserve; — and how can I complain of the one, or the other?

But suppose there is no purpose of God respecting this matter. I find that the same objection lies against the course of the divine administration. Shall I then take upon me to complain of God's actual conduct, and to say that in this thing, or in that, God is partial and unjust? I here have to do with facts.

God does not renew and save all. He does renew and save some, and those no better in their unrenewed state, than the rest. Do I object to this fact? And if I should deny that God by his Spirit makes the difference, and hold that all he does is to furnish the means of salvation, and present motives to induce men to repent; I should be obliged to encounter other difficulties. For God in his providence, furnishes the *means* of salvation to only a part of mankind. Only a small proportion have at present any knowledge of Christ. Now God could send the gospel to all the world, as easily as to a part. This providential work belongs to him by the acknowledgment of all. But while he has caused a part of our race to hear the glad tidings, he has left the rest in ignorance. Almost two thousand years have passed away since the Advent of Christ; during which time the Almighty Sovereign of the world has done great and marvellous works among the nations; but the majority of mankind are still in pagan darkness. Here the difficulty is as great, if not exactly the same, as I find in the doctrine of election. So that I cannot avoid the objection, or in the least diminish its weight, by rejecting the doctrine of the divine purposes, inasmuch as the objection remains in full strength in regard to the actual providence of God. But the denial of the doctrine would involve me in real and distressing difficulties respecting the character of God, who, on that principle, must be considered as acting without design or purpose, and of course without wisdom; — difficulties too respecting the Scriptures, which I believe to be the word of God, and which clearly teach a doctrine which I now consider as unworthy of my belief. How can I dispose of such difficulties as these? How quickly am I confounded, — how does my own reason resent the indignity put upon it, if I try to think of God as existing eternally without any purposes in his own mind, and as engaging in the works of creation and providence without determining what he will do, or what ends he will accomplish! — or if I try to think of God's actual administration as anything but the execution of his wise and benevolent purposes! And how could I manage to keep up my belief that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, if I should

reject the representations it makes of God's eternal counsels, and of his sovereignty in the kingdom of providence and grace?

But I find passages which very emphatically declare that God would not that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. I cannot deny that these passages *seem* to stand against the doctrine of election, and to prove that God equally desires and purposes the salvation of all men. In reflecting upon these passages, I remind myself of the principle, that I must not derive my faith from particular texts, taken by themselves, but from all the texts which relate to the subject, taken together. Now there are several texts upon which the sacred writers evidently lay great stress, which teach that God desires the salvation of all men, and would not that any should perish. In the same inspired book there are texts, which teach with equal clearness, that he has chosen a part of mankind to holiness and eternal life, and has given them to Christ to be made partakers of his salvation. Now I must shape my faith, so as not to set aside either of these classes of texts, but to do full justice to both. How then shall I proceed? Why, I must hold, that God really would have all men to be saved, and yet *in such a sense*, as to admit of the fair and obvious meaning of the texts which declare, that his people were eternally chosen to salvation in distinction from others. And I must hold to this election of some *in such a way*, as to admit the fair sense of the other texts, which speak of God's desire for the salvation of all. As the matter stands, I must regard these different classes of texts, both of which are true and important, as modifying the sense of each other. I must take each class in such a sense, as not to supersede the sense of the other; otherwise I cannot hold both to be true. I come then finally to this conclusion; that God does really, and *in an important sense*, desire the salvation of all, while, *in another sense*, he chooses only a part to salvation. I ask then, what *is the sense*, in which he chooses the salvation of all? And the answer may be something like this; that he regards their salvation as a good of vast importance, and, *in itself considered, exceedingly desirable.* As a wise and benevolent God he must

so regard it. And he desires their salvation in the way of compassion and good-will, such as he shows in his merciful treatment of them. He has manifested his willingness and desire to save all, by providing an atonement sufficient for all; by giving a sincere invitation, unlimited in its terms, that sinners would accept of his mercy; and by prescribing the same reasonable conditions of salvation for all as for any, and by promising to save all who comply with those conditions. So that it is now true, that if any sinners, especially any in Christian lands, fail of salvation, it will not be owing to any want of willingness on God's part to save, but altogether to their own unreasonable and inexcusable rejection of proffered mercy. In these remarks however, I may not do full justice to those precious passages in the word of God, which teach his willingness and desire to save sinners. But this is perfectly clear, that if men will attend to the disclosures made of God's mercy in the gift of his Son, and in the offers, invitations and promises of his word, and in all his dispensations, in the spirit of child-like simplicity and faith; they will find that the passages referred to convey a truth unspeakably honorable to the benevolence and grace of God, and of infinite moment to the world; — a truth on the ground of which any sinners and all sinners may come to Christ with a penitent heart, not doubting that if they thus come they shall be pardoned and saved; — a truth which has been to all real Christians their warrant and only warrant to apply to the Saviour for the blessings of his free salvation, and which is an equal warrant to all who hear the gospel.

The other class of texts point out a real election of a part of mankind to holiness and salvation; a purpose to save, which is carried into effect; but which is such and so executed, as to leave unimpaired God's benevolence to all; his provision of an all-sufficient atonement for the salvation of all who will accept it; his sincere and gracious invitation to all, and his perfect readiness to save all on the terms prescribed.

According to these views, the phrase, God wills that men should be saved, is to be taken in two senses. In the first of these, it

is expressive of his benevolence towards all men and his willingness to save any sinners on the proper conditions. So Christ desired the salvation of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered thy children together — but ye would not." He would have saved them, had they been willing. This may be called the *practical and experimental* sense, and perhaps the *conditional* sense also. It is the sense implied in the above cited and most remarkable words of Jesus over guilty Jerusalem; it is the sense implied in his dying for the sins of the world; in the calls of his gospel; and in his promises to those who believe. It is on these grounds, that the ministers of Christ freely offer salvation to sinners indiscriminately; and sinners, one and all, are authorized to come to Christ for pardon and life; — *as fully authorized*, as they could be, if there were no purpose of election, or even if it were his purpose to save all. The phrase, taken in the second sense, expresses God's purpose or determination actually to sanctify and save a definite number of individual sinners; a purpose as specific and effectual as it could be, if the non-elect were left in the same condition with the fallen angels, and if the offers of mercy and all the provisions of the gospel and the means of salvation were confined to the elect. In this way, I endeavor to do equal justice to the two different representations of Scripture, and to apply each of the momentous truths, so clearly taught, to its proper uses. This I can do, without being at all hampered with the inquiry, *how* the two can be reconciled? — an inquiry which I can at once dismiss without any harm. What concerns me is, to secure the benefit of each portion of divine truth; a benefit not only indescribably important, but perfectly attainable, whether I can or cannot show how the two portions of truth consist with each other.

I have thus freely laid before you my own conceptions on this profound subject. I have told you what difficulties I have myself encountered, and how I have surmounted them; the struggles and disquietudes which I have experienced, and how I have been able to relieve or alleviate them; my endeavors to find the true meaning of the sacred writers, and the degree of satisfaction

to which I have attained. I have aimed to treat the subject before me honestly and fairly; and I am happy in the result. And it will add much to my happiness, if this history of the workings of my own mind may be of use to any who are inquiring after the truth.

LECTURE XLI.

SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE PROPER MANNER OF TREATING THE DOCTRINE OF THE DIVINE PURPOSES.

In this closing Lecture on the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, I shall offer you a few suggestions as to *the proper manner of treating the subject in your studies and contemplations, and as to the uses to which it should be applied.*

1. *Content not yourself with any summary statement of the doctrine*, which is found in a Catechism or Creed, or with any larger and more scientific statement of it in a system of Theology. Although such a statement is on many accounts important and necessary, it should by no means be regarded as sufficient by itself, or as superseding other means of forming correct and specific notions on the subject. How do you proceed in regard to the natural sciences? You find in your books of philosophy, a general proposition respecting the phenomena of the heavenly bodies, the properties of plants and minerals, the principles of electricity and magnetism, and the power of steam. But if you should stop here, your ideas would be vague and defective. For the explanation of the principles laid down in your books, you sometimes resort to experiments. Sometimes you carefully observe the facts, as they are exhibited before you in the natural world. You look at the heavenly bodies. You make use of optical instruments. You go into the garden of the botanist, or into the museum of the mineralogist, or into the field or the forest; and thus you learn philosophy, as exhibited to your view in nature. You learn it from facts. In this way, the general, abstract notions, often defective or obscure, which you derived from a scientific statement of principles, are ex-

panded, and rendered clear, correct, and definite. Without a careful observation of facts, no one can attain to correct and adequate ideas of philosophy. The same is true in Theology, particularly in regard to the present subject. If you were to stop with any general statement of the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, your apprehensions of it would be vague and incomplete, and would vary more or less from the exact truth. You must peruse the Scriptures, and see how the doctrine is there taught, sometimes by direct declarations, sometimes by allusions, sometimes by the history of facts. You must observe the dispensations of Divine Providence and the events which take place, as the execution of the divine purposes, and as showing what they are. And finally you must turn your thoughts within, and see how the divine purposes have been developed and carried into effect in your own experience, — and if you are a believer, in your own Christian experience. You must notice what God has done, and what has been the manner of his proceeding, in carrying his purpose of salvation into effect. By these means, used diligently under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, your views will become Scriptural, definite, and practical; and the difficulties, arising from mere speculation will, of themselves, gradually subside.

I shall here quote a passage from Coleridge, which falls in with the remarks above made relative to Christian experience. He is speaking, in a round-about way, of the doctrine of election, which, he says, is "one of the stumbling stones in the ordinary conceptions of the Christian faith, to which the infidel points in scorn and which far better men pass by in silent perplexity; yet, surely, from mistaken conceptions." He then pursues the subject thus — "I suppose the person with whom I am arguing, already so far a believer, as to have convinced himself both that a state of enduring bliss is attainable under certain conditions, and that these conditions consist in his compliance with the rules prescribed in the Christian Scriptures. These rules he likewise admits to be such, that by the very constitution of the human mind, a faithful compliance with them cannot but have consequences of some sort. But these consequences are morever distinctly described in the same Scriptures

in which the conditions are recorded; and though some of them may be apparent to God only, yet the greater number of them are of such a nature, that they cannot exist unknown to the individual in whom they exist. As little possible is it that he should find these consequences in himself, and not find in them the sure marks, that he is at the time in the right road to the life promised under these conditions. Now I dare assert, that no such man can pursue the records of history with a reflecting spirit, or look round the world with an observant eye, and not find himself compelled to admit, that all men are not on the right road, that even in Christian countries, many — a fearful many — have not their faces turned towards it. This then is a mere matter of fact. Now comes the question: Shall the believer, who thus hopes on the appointed grounds of hope, attribute this distinction exclusively to his own resolves and strivings, — or if not exclusively, yet primarily and principally? Shall he refer the first movements and preparations to his own will and understanding, and bottom his claim to the promises on his own comparative excellence? If not, if no man dare take this honor to himself; to whom shall he assign it, if not to that Being in whom the promise originated, and on whom its fulfilment depends? If he stop here, who shall blame him? By what argument shall his reasoning be invalidated, that might not be urged with equal force against any essential difference between obedient and disobedient, Christians and worldlings? — that would not imply that both sorts alike are . . . the sons of God by adoption? If he stop here, I say, who shall drive him from his position? For thus far he is practically concerned; this conscience requires; — this the highest interests of morality demand. It is a question of facts, of the will and the deed, to argue against which, on the abstract notions and possibilities of the speculative reason, is as unreasonable, as an attempt to decide a question of colors by pure Geometry. — Thus then the doctrine of Election is in itself a necessary inference from an undeniable fact — necessary at least for all who hold, that the best of men are what they are through the grace of God."

2. Both in your own contemplations, and in the business of

instructing others, endeavor to *give the doctrine its right place, and its right proportion.* The doctrine certainly has a place in the system of divine truth. It has its own proper place. To bring it in everywhere is as real a mistake, as to bring it in nowhere. If you will consider the nature and bearings of this truth, you will perceive, that it has a close connection with several other truths; and when you view it in that connection, you will see it in its clearness, its beauty, and its strength. In that place it harmonizes with everything else; just as a piece of timber in its proper place in a building, is adapted to other parts around it. Put the doctrine of divine purposes in its proper place in the system, and there will be no interference or disagreement with anything else. Put it in another place, and there is collision. Every member of the human body has its proper place, and there it works kindly and harmoniously, and is not only useful, but indispensable. Take pains then to find out, where the general doctrine of the Divine Purposes belongs, and where the particular doctrine of Election is to stand, and with what other truths it is to be immediately connected. Take a single example. It would be doing violence to the doctrine, to put it in the place of the divine law, and to make it a rule of duty to us.—The general doctrine has evidently a near relation to the character of God, as the Creator, Upholder, and Governor of the world, and to the course of events in his providence. The doctrine of election is closely connected with the sinful and ruined state of mankind, and with the whole work of divine grace in the salvation of sinners. On this point you will find it of the first importance to study the Scriptures, and see what place is assigned to the doctrine there. Examine the various passages where the inspired writers refer to the doctrine, and learn how it lay in their minds, and in what connection and for what purposes they introduced it.

It is also important to give the doctrine its right proportion. Either to raise it above or sink it below its proper magnitude, is as great a mistake, as to put it in a wrong place. In the system of divine truth, this doctrine, though truly important, is not to be so magnified and exalted, as to overshadow or set aside other truths.

You may give a general representation of this doctrine that is in itself substantially correct; and yet you may so magnify it, or so diminish it, that it shall be an error, and shall have the influence of error. If in a picture of a man whom you know, his eye should be painted truly, except that it is four times as large as it should be; you would say that the eye is monstrous, and that the painter, by thus magnifying that part, has made the whole portrait false. And the effect would be somewhat similar, if the eye should be as much too small. As to the doctrine before us, it may be difficult to form an exact judgment of its relative importance. But by devout meditation, and by the aid of Christian experience, and by diligent and persevering study of the Scriptures, you may guard against hurtful extremes, and may entertain ideas on the subject which are essentially right.

But I must caution you not to be too solicitous and scrupulous about the exact place and proportion of the doctrine; as this would embarrass and fetter you, and prevent you from doing justice to the subject at any time. Believe the doctrine firmly, and declare it plainly and fully; and remember that it is better to give it too high a place, than no place at all.

3. Avoid the mistake of those who are continually agitating the question *how* the divine decrees can be reconciled with our free, moral agency, with the goodness of God, and with the sincerity of his invitations and commands. It may not be within the province of human reason in the present life to discover satisfactorily, in what particular way the reconciliation is to be made out. While the mode of reconciling two particular truths may be perfectly clear to beings of higher intellect, it may be quite otherwise to us. And our attempts to clear up the obscurity may have no effect but to increase it. Consider too, that our discovering *how* to reconcile the two truths, if that were practicable, might be of no use to us. It will be best for us confidently to believe each of the truths on its own proper evidence, and then to believe them *to be reconcilable*, not troubling ourselves to discover *how* they are so. Reconciling the different truths above mentioned may not be the proper business of speculation or logic. And it may be, that the

desired reconciliation, which ought not to be attempted in that way, can be easily worked out by common sense, and Christian experience — in the *heart*, though not in the *head*. And it may be, that *he is the most likely to perceive the consistency of the two doctrines, who labors the least to do it*. And there is one thing more to be said, namely; that the attempts we have so often made to remove the alleged inconsistency may have proved unsuccessful, merely because *there is no inconsistency*, and so we have brought ourselves into trouble by laboring to do something, where there was nothing to be done. How much better to spend our time and strength in discovering the clear and conclusive evidence of the different truths, and in applying them to their important practical uses!

4. It is important to hold other truths in connection with the doctrine of the divine purposes. Other doctrines are as true as this. The Scriptures reveal the whole circle of religious truths, and our minds are made to receive them all, and to be benefitted by them all. If you sever this doctrine from others, you do it violence and injure its influence, just as you would do violence to one of your limbs, and would deprive it of vitality and render it useless, if you should sever it from the body. Take an illustration again from the art of painting. Let the artist draw on the canvas the well known eye of a parent or friend. He paints the eye exactly, but he paints nothing but the eye. There it stands alone. You look at it, and you may recognize it. But it is disconnected from all other parts of the countenance, and it has no just expression; and instead of being beautiful and delightful, it is strange and even frightful, because it stands alone. So if you set forth the doctrine of the divine purposes alone, separate from the great body of divine truth, you deprive it of its beauty, and hinder the right impression of it on the mind. But remember, that by connecting other truths with this doctrine, you do not alter the doctrine itself. The doctrine has its own nature — it is just what it is — whether it stands alone or in company with other truths. You ask then, what important object we accomplish by keeping it in company with other truths. I answer; though we

alter not its nature, we greatly alter its effect on the mind. If you contemplate and believe the doctrine alone, it will have little if any good influence upon you. And it will certainly have some bad influence; — yea, all its influence may be bad. And all its influence would doubtless be bad upon any one, who had never contemplated and believed any other truth. Every truth has indeed its own natural tendency, its own appropriate influence. But we can never experience that influence, unless other truths also have a place and an influence in our minds. Any particular truth will not appear to us as it should, unless it stands before us in connection with other truths. Each truth, as I said, has its own nature; but we shall never apprehend it correctly, unless other truths also shed their light upon us. All this is as true of other doctrines, as of the doctrine before us. Every truth is liable to be and very likely to be misconceived, if it is taken separately. Suppose you believe in one of God's attributes separately from the rest, say his benevolence, separately from his wisdom and justice. Would your conception of his character, even of his benevolence, be according to truth? Is such a benevolence, — a benevolence without wisdom and justice, the benevolence of God? Would its operations in the government of the world, be those to which divine benevolence leads? Or suppose you believe in the justice of God separately from his goodness and mercy. You would have then a God who is merely just; who will invariably punish the disobedient, and reward the obedient; but who will never in any instance forgive sin. Such a God is not our God, who, through atoning blood, is merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, though still a God of justice.

Suppose you hold the doctrine of justification by faith without works, separately from all other gospel truths. The doctrine, taken thus by itself, though really true, would not be true *to you.* You would not rightly apprehend it, and would not be rightly affected by it. It might produce a very hurtful effect.

I have touched upon these examples to show that my remarks as to the doctrine of Divine Purposes apply to other doctrines as

well as to this. The result is, that the different truths of religion are to be taken together, in their proper connection, and are all to shed their light and to exert their influence upon us jointly. I do not mean that we must at all times actually connect them together in our contemplations, or in our discourses. It is often necessary, in order to a full understanding of any important truth, that we should for a time fix our thoughts upon it exclusively. But at other times, we must consider other truths. They must all dwell in us, and must unitedly give direction and character to our feelings and actions. If any one truth, contemplated alone, has a tendency to lead us astray, other truths must come in to check that tendency, and to bring us back to the right way. It is of immense importance that all the parts of truth, united into one harmonious system, should help to form our intellectual and moral character. The perversions and deficiencies of character which are found in many Christians, are owing, in part, to the fact that they have been deprived of the good effect of this or that portion of divine truth.

But what are the particular truths which must stand in connection with the doctrine of Divine Purposes, and which will secure its appropriate and happy influence? I shall answer this inquiry briefly, wishing you always to keep it fixed in your minds, that no other truths are to be brought in, to supersede the doctrine of the Divine Purposes, or in any way to alter it. Letting the doctrine itself remain just as it is set forth in the Scriptures, my object is, to guard you against misunderstanding, or abusing it, and to help you to experience the benefit which it is adapted to impart.

One important truth which should be placed in close connection with the doctrine of the Divine purposes, is that we are free, moral beings, proper subjects of the divine law. You cannot get any right conception of the general doctrine, particularly the doctrine of election, unless you consider it as relating to moral beings, who are indeed wholly dependent on God, but who have a real agency of their own, for which they are justly held responsible.

Another truth to be taken in connection with the doctrine of Divine Purposes, is, that the divine law, not the Divine purpose.

is *the rule of duty*. God has his prerogatives, and one of these is, to control all hearts, all actions, and all events, and to reign forever. And this he will do according to his eternal purpose. But we are his creatures, and subjects of his government; and he has informed us what he would have us to do. We have our proper work, our sphere of action; and the directions which are contained in the precepts of Scripture, are to us the rule and the only rule of duty. Our whole work is to render obedience to the divine law. To ascertain our duty in any case, we are to inquire, not what are the sovereign purposes of God, but what are his commands. Always keep hold of this principle. If we would please God, we must conform to the precepts of his word. Never be afraid that you will act contrary to God's purposes, by obeying his commands. In your faith and practice adhere to this principle, and you will avoid the rock on which many have been shipwrecked.

Even if the divine purposes are made known, they cannot on that account be regarded as the rule of our duty. In many instances mentioned in Scripture, they were expressly revealed, and revealed to those very persons, to whose conduct they related. But no one was on that account under obligation to carry them into effect. Even if God reveals his purpose respecting the good actions of men, they are bound to do those actions, not because it is the revealed purpose of God that they shall do them, but because it is his command. If the actions predetermined are sinful, they are none the less sinful, because they are predetermined. Some theological writers argue, that the divine purposes are not the rule of our duty, *because they are unknown*. I deny the validity of this argument, and assert that the divine purposes can no more be our rule when known, than when unknown. But why is it not right to make the divine purposes the rule of our conduct? I answer, first, because we are not God, and secondly, because God requires us to make his law our rule, and to conform to that.

Another thing which is to be placed in close connection with the purposes of God, is the reality, the truth and sincerity of his

invitations, promises, and warnings. God invites and urges all who hear the gospel to accept the blessings which it proffers. He promises eternal life to all who will believe, and solemnly warns men not to rush upon endless misery by neglecting the great salvation. Now these invitations, promises and warnings are to be regarded as addressed to us with perfect truth and sincerity — truth and sincerity above what can be found in man — such truth and sincerity as belong to an all-perfect God. We are to hold up these Scripture invitations, promises and warnings, with freedom and earnestness, and without being in the least checked or embarrassed by the consideration of the doctrine of election. That doctrine is true and important; but it is also true and important, that God invites and commands all who hear the gospel to repent and believe, that they may be saved. The invitations and commands of holy writ do not mean anything different from what they would mean, if there were no purpose of God to save a part, or even if it were his purpose to save all. Sinners are as much under obligation to comply with these invitations, they have as good a warrant and as many motives to comply, they have as fair an opportunity to comply, as if there were no divine election. These invitations and promises have as much reality and as much worth to sinners, as they would have if election were set aside. We can with perfect safety act upon them. For God does truly express his mind by them; — is truly in earnest, when he addresses them to us. All who have complied with God's invitations, and trusted in his promises, have found them true and faithful. When you preach the gospel, never suffer the thought of the divine purposes to fetter you in the least, or to hinder you from proclaiming the mercy of God, and inviting and exhorting sinners to turn from their evil ways and believe the gospel. Never stop to dispose of any speculative difficulties, arising from the doctrine of predestination. If in such a case those difficulties perplex your mind, it is because you are in the dark. If they hinder you from a free, earnest, and full declaration of the gracious offers and urgent invitations of the gospel, you may be sure you have turned aside from the truth. And the cause

of your turning aside may probably be this; that instead of heartily believing in the divine invitations and promises, as the Scriptures reveal them, and following implicitly the steps of Christ and the apostles; you go about to inquire *how* these invitations can be reconciled with the doctrine of election; and not being able to find out the mode of reconciling them, you conclude, or partly conclude, that one or the other must be given up. In this way, some are led to give up the doctrine of election, that they may be free to deal with sinners, as the prophets and apostles did. Others are led to neglect the invitations and offers of the gospel, or to hold them forth partially and feebly, lest they should interfere with the doctrine of election. Now, I say, we are to believe the invitations and promises of the gospel as fully, and to hold them forth as clearly and earnestly, and with as much confidence in the truth and sincerity of God, as those can do, who disbelieve the doctrine of election. Keep hold of both parts of revelation. I can assure you, that there never was and never will be the least interference between the one and the other.

I shall mention one more point of divine truth, which is to be held in connection with the doctrine of Divine Purposes, and that is, the account which the Scriptures give of future retributions. This account shows, that the saints will be graciously rewarded for their good deeds, and the wicked justly punished for their sins; that the wicked in the coming world will know and feel, that the real cause of their perishing is not the purpose or decree of God, but their own persevering wickedness; that their doom is just what it would be on the ground of strict, impartial justice, had there been no divine purpose. God's purpose of election and reprobation is not in whole or in part the ground or rule of retribution. Men will be judged by the word of God, — by the law and the gospel. And whenever you set forth the transactions of the judgment day, set them forth just as the sacred writers do, and thus guard your own minds and the minds of others against any improper influence which might otherwise arise from the doctrine we have been considering.

5. If you would entertain just views of the doctrine of predes-

tination, you must *keep your spiritual faculties awake.* You must cultivate the moral sense, and have a clear discernment of what is right and wrong in yourself. If we are at any time in the condition of those in the Apostle's day, who objected to the doctrine of God's sovereign election, as it was set forth by him, and are ready to say as they did: "Why doth he yet find fault?" If he himself has determined from eternity whom he will save and whom he will give over to perish; if he has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and hardens whom he will, why does he impute blame to us? — If we are at any time pressed with this difficulty, how shall we obtain relief? I answer, by listening to the plain teachings of God's holy word. We must consider what is our proper place in relation to the Almighty Sovereign of the Universe. If our eyes are open to see what God is, and to view our own heart and life in the light of truth; we shall no longer ask, why God finds fault with us. We shall know and feel that God is glorious in holiness and goodness, and that it has always been our duty to love and adore him, and keep his commandments. Our objections against his purposes, and the chief difficulties which the doctrine occasions, spring up from the darkness of our minds, and are all scattered, as soon as the true light shines within us. Seek then this inward light, this clear spiritual discernment. I have known many persons, who have been full of false reasoning, and distressed with difficulties, in regard to the doctrine we are considering; and I have labored abundantly, but in vain, to show them their mistakes. At length the light of truth, imparted by the word and Spirit of God, has shone in their hearts, and they have been convinced of sin. Immediately their mistakes and difficulties have vanished. As the light has shone, the darkness has fled. Sinners cannot reason away those speculative difficulties which originate in the blindness of their hearts. They look at things with a diseased eye; in consequence of which all their apprehensions are false. These false apprehensions result chiefly from a moral cause. Remove that cause and the effects will cease. Let men be convinced of sin, and have a humble, penitent heart, and let them reverence the Scriptures, and learn to pray; and their misapprehensions will gradually subside.

And if any of these remain in Christians, they are to be removed by the study of God's word, by the cultivation of holy affection, and by the spirit of prayer. Pious and holy affection will lead you to distinguish between facts and illusions. It will not contradict true reason, but will keep reason from overleaping its appointed limits. Right affection is in short the key to knowledge. If any one is inclined to do the will of God, he shall know the doctrine of his word. Obey God's commands and keep yourselves in his love, and you cannot but delight in the thought that he reigns over all. You will find rest to your soul in the belief, that a wise and benevolent God has marked out the plan of the Universe, and that his omnipotence will carry it into effect.

6. Labor to obtain a clear and definite knowledge of the real source of the opposition which is felt against the doctrine of God's purposes. This doctrine presents God before us as an Almighty Sovereign, sitting on the throne of the Universe. You know how natural it is for a man who covets a high place, to look with an evil eye upon one who occupies that place, and excludes him from it. Unhumbled sinners aspire to supremacy; and they cannot look with complacency upon him who is God over all. They are lifted up with pride, and are unwilling to take that place which the absolute sovereignty of God assigns to them. They wish to manage their concerns according to their own will, and cannot consent that God should manage them according to *his* will. When you tell them that God is a Sovereign and will conduct the affairs of his creatures according to his own pleasure, and in subserviency to his own glory; you tell them an unwelcome truth. There is a controversy between them and God. And this controversy will last forever, unless their hearts are so changed as to come into a state of cordial agreement with his holy character and purposes. Let them truly love God, and then the more he is exalted, the more they will be pleased. Let them behold his glory, and cordially trust in him, and then nothing can delight them more, than that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. Oh! that those who are opposed to the doctrine of God's sovereign purposes, may look into the case as it is, and may see in season where the stress of the difficulty lies.

7. *Make the doctrine of election a subject of pious gratitude and joy, and apply it to its proper uses.* While Christians give their assent to this doctrine as one of the truths of revelation, they seldom derive any comfort from it, or make it a matter of thanksgiving to God. The Apostle Paul says to believers at Thessalonica: "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth." In his epistle to the Ephesians he asserts the doctrine, and returns to it again and again, and dwells upon it, as an interesting and pleasing subject. And in the 8th of Romans, he sets it forth as a matter of elevated and triumphant joy. And so it has been regarded by evangelical ministers and churches. In the 17th article of the Church of England, it is said: "that the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant and unspeakable comfort to godly persons; that it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, and fervently kindle their love." The synod of Dort say, that "it affords unspeakable consolation to holy and pious souls." And in the Westminster Confession of Faith, it is said, that this doctrine properly handled, "affords matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel."

It is evident, that the doctrine of the Divine Purposes in general, and of election in particular, is suited to afford comfort and joy to real Christians, to excite their gratitude to God, and their admiration of his mercy, and in various ways to contribute to their spiritual benefit. So far as we have evidence that we are true Christians, we have evidence that we are among God's elect; that he chose us in Christ before the world began. Any valuable gift bestowed upon us is suited to excite our gratitude. But the value of the gift and the warmth of our gratitude are increased, if we know that our benefactor had long intended such a favor to us, and that he was influenced by a sincere and unalterable affection for us. And if we are sensible that we have never done anything to deserve his favor, but much to the contrary, and that his inten-

tion to do us good was the effect of his disinterested friendship, and that the favor intended was altogether gratuitous; then our gratitude will be likely to rise high, and we shall want words to express our admiration of his goodness. Now if we are Christians, the spiritual blessings which God has already bestowed upon us, and which are a presage of what is to come, are of inestimable value. The influence of the Spirit to create us anew, the pardon of our sins, and peace with God — what words can describe the preciousness of these divine blessings — this salvation begun in the soul! And when we rise in devout contemplation to the Author of this precious salvation, and trace it back to its source in his eternal love, and his eternal purpose to bestow this very gift; what thoughts and feelings does this view of the subject kindle within us! Did God, the humble believer may say — did the great and glorious God think of me, and set his heart upon my salvation, before the world was? Knowing perfectly, as he did, what a perverse, guilty creature I should be, did he really intend to make me an heir of his kingdom, and appoint all the means necessary to such a blessed result? Did he from everlasting choose me to salvation, and give me to Christ, as one that should be redeemed by his death, and sanctified by his Spirit? Through all past ages, was he continually mindful of me? When he gave me being, and when he preserved me in infancy and childhood, healing my sicknesses and rescuing me from danger, was it his kind purpose to make me a monument of his grace? While I was sinning against him, and refusing his offered mercy, did he still determine to call me with a holy calling, and to give me a place among his children? And when the time of mercy came, did he, notwithstanding all I had done, call me into his kingdom according to the counsel of his will, and bestow upon me those divine blessings, which he had designed for me millions of ages before I was born? And did he thus purpose to save me, and thus actually begin the work of salvation, when there was nothing in my heart or life which rendered me any more worthy of his favor, than those who are left to perish, and when I might have been justly passed by, as well as they? What shall I say to these things? When I think of God's eternal purpose and grace

respecting my salvation, I am filled with wonder, gratitude and joy; and I feel that eternity only can afford me sufficient opportunity to render due thanks and praise to him, who has thus loved me with an everlasting love.

This doctrine is adapted to promote all the branches of holiness. If God has "chosen us to salvation," it is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." Salvation is the end, and these are the appointed means. If then we value salvation, and would attain to it, we must sincerely believe the truth, and must labor for our sanctification; this being the only way in which we can enjoy eternal life. If we are the objects of God's special favor, he has "predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son." If then we would fall in with this divine predestination and avail ourselves of its benefits, we must make it our constant object to be conformed to the image of Christ. If God has so loved us, and bestowed such blessings upon us, what can we do less than to honor his name, and diligently obey his commands? The fact that we were given to Christ, brings us into a close union with him, and with all the laws and interests of his church. And when we consider that we have been brought into this blessed state by the special favor of God, in execution of his unchangeable purpose, we must feel powerfully constrained not only to confide in him, but to yield ourselves to his service, and cheerfully to do and to suffer whatever he appoints for us.

I might say much more to illustrate the adaptedness of this doctrine to impart comfort and joy to believers, and to promote their spiritual benefit. — And how much better would it be for us to dwell upon the delightful and useful views of the doctrine, and to follow it out into its happy results, than to be forever laboring to vindicate it against objections, or to find how it can be reconciled with other truths! Who will be likely to feel any great interest in the doctrine, even if he admits it to be true, unless he sees something in it which is fitted to comfort his heart, to excite his gratitude, and to encourage him in the work to which he is called? Have we not in this matter been chargeable with a grievous deficiency? Have we not essentially failed of giving the doctrine of

election the place it should hold in the devout and joyful exercises of our own hearts?

I find it difficult for me to do justice to the impression which has been made on my own mind by the view which I have now taken of the subject. The doctrine of election, like every other doctrine of revelation, is in its own nature adapted to practical purposes. It is suited to do good. And the intrinsic excellence and truth of the doctrine is most clearly seen, when it is made use of for the purposes intended. No one will be likely to form a right apprehension of it, who does not experience its benefits. Those are the right views of it, which bring comfort and profit to the soul. The doctrine in its own nature is very comforting and useful to the children of God. If the whole body of Christians would but make their calling and election sure; if they would, through divine help, attain to such spiritual habits, to such purity of heart, to such fervency of love, and such diligence in their work, as to make it manifest that their names are written in heaven; with what unutterable joy would they dwell upon the thought, that God eternally loved them, and in his infinite grace chose them to salvation, and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son; and that what he has already done for them, and what he is now doing, and what he will do hereafter, is only carrying into effect the benevolent intention which was in his heart from everlasting! What fervent thanks would they give to God! How would a sweet and heavenly ecstasy be waked up in their souls! How would they delight themselves in God, and rest in his love! The doctrine of his eternal purpose and sovereign grace would be *all light* to them. When Christians arrive in heaven, and see how they came there, and behold God as he is; do you think they will find any darkness in the doctrine of his purposes? No. The darkness which we now sometimes seem to see in the doctrine, is in our own eyes. And our fault is, that we labor to clear away the darkness, as though it belonged to the truth of God; when in fact there is no darkness anywhere, except in ourselves. Let this darkness be removed, and the doctrine we have considered, will come forth from the cloud which once

obscured it, and will present itself to our view in its own beauty and glory, and will "be full of sweet and unspeakable comfort."

Our doctrine is of great practical use to Christian pastors and missionaries, who are laboring, with little or no visible success, for the salvation of sinners, and are often subjected to severe trials for righteousness' sake. They can quiet their minds, and patiently endure disappointment and suffering, by referring all their concerns to their Father and their God, and by cordially acquiescing in his wise and holy purposes. And besides this, they may trust in the abounding grace of God, and strengthen themselves with the hope, that he entertains thoughts of mercy towards many of those to whom they are preaching the gospel, and that in due time he will call them with a holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given them in Christ before the world began. So the Lord encouraged Paul at Corinth saying, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace, for I am with thee, and no man shall hurt thee, for I have much people in this city." Here was a ground of encouragement and comfort which nothing could equal, and of which those must be destitute who, instead of believing in the sovereign grace of God, look for the conversion of sinners from their own corrupt will, or from the mere influence of the appointed means of grace.

It is sometimes said, that impenitent sinners have nothing to do with the doctrine of election. In a certain sense this is true. They cannot enjoy the comfort of looking upon themselves as chosen to salvation. They have no evidence that they are among the elect, and of course they cannot use the doctrine, as those do who have made their calling and election sure. But it would be an injury to sinners to attempt to conceal the doctrine from them. When it comes before their minds, it is suited to produce a powerful effect upon them. A minister who possessed sound judgment, and who had been long acquainted with the work of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, once told me, that a plain, scriptural statement of the doctrine of election at the commencement of a revival of religion, had more effect in making known to sinners the evil of their own hearts, and convincing them of sin, than any

other truth which he had ever preached. And who does not perceive the adaptedness of the doctrine to affect sinners in this manner? It detects the pride and enmity of their hearts. When rightly understood and felt, it puts an end to their reliance upon their own resolutions and their own doings, and makes them sensible, that their salvation hangs upon the unmerited favor of God. It shows them the criminality and madness of continuing to sin against the Sovereign of the universe, who is able to save, and to destroy. What divine truth ever disturbed, so effectually as this, the carnal security of sinners, or so clearly exposed to their view the pride and enmity of their own hearts, or so fully convinced them, that unless they are born again, they cannot see the kingdom of heaven? And when sinners are deeply affected with their guilty and ruined state, and when, after many painful, unsuccessful efforts, they begin to yield to feelings of despair; then what doctrine has power like this to keep them from sinking, and to show them that God, who is rich in mercy, may interpose in their behalf, and pluck them as brands from the burning? Under the influence of this God-exalting doctrine, how many sinners have escaped from every refuge of lies, and been constrained to fall into the hands of a merciful God, saying, if I perish, I perish! And how many have thus been delivered from their fears, and obtained a peace passing all understanding! And how frequently has it been observed, that those who have felt the pressure of this central truth, and have been made willing to be saved by free and sovereign grace, prove to be the most firm, consistent, active, devoted Christians!